Don Juan

BY GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

***Cantos I – V** annotated and illustrated*
by Peter Gallagher

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Foreword

ON 15 JULY, 1819, London publisher John Murray issued 1500 copies of Cantos I and II of Lord Byron's new poem *Don Juan* anonymously: he feared it might harm his Author's brilliant reputation and his own. ***Don⚔Juan*** spurned the censorship and self-censorship of late Regency literature. Here was a major poet writing light-heartedly, with great energy and wit about "*what everyone knows*" of sex, fame, war, religion and liberty but few — no establishment figure, certainly, in 1819 — would discuss. Except Lord Byron.

The first edition was a roaring success (and quickly pirated). Murray continued, anxiously to attempt to 'curate' the manuscripts of the following Cantos and, on 8 August 1821, published Cantos III-V. But Byron, exasperated with Murray's 'corrections' and misprints, used the Hunt brothers' radical press for all subsequent Cantos.

This annotated edition collects those first five Cantos. A second volume is planned for Cantos VI to X, which brings Juan on his "grand tour" to England… and, perhaps, a third.

How Should you read *Don⚔Juan*? *"Just jump right in*"' is a good strategy. The verse of ***Don⚔Juan*** is infallibly metric and canters on stanza-after-stanza with clever rhymes, hilarious imagery and brutal disregard for propriety, pomp and political correctness.

In every respect, ***Don⚔Juan*** is a performance of, and by, Byron. **Try reading out loud** – even muttering to yourself – you'll quickly find yourself acting the part. It's a multi-layered a performance: self-conscious and contrived for comic effect so we can never be quite sure when Byron is play-acting and when (if ever) he is not. Still, he manages to make us feel we're having just as much fun as he is.

Byron probably did not have a clear idea of the whole poem when it was first published. ***Don⚔Juan*** was issued as a sort of *serial*. Still, it's not the random journey that he liked to claim (especially to his anxious publisher, John Murray). The trail of Juan's travels — from his youth in Seville, through his Aegean love affair to his captivity in Contantinople, bravery at the siege of Ismail, prominence in St Petersburg and mission to the English court — is an adventure calculated by Byron to propel his satire and and provide the variety of scenery and manners that — in a jokey kind of way — justifies the "epic" label that Byron ironically claims.

Then Bryon wanders off the trail of his narrative a dozen times or more in every Canto. His *diversions* are almost as long as the narrative and are in some ways the best part of the poem. So… don't be afraid of **wandering**. Wandering in your reading is good: I hope my brief tables

of contents at the head of each Canto will help. They are a sort of guide to the "good bits" and you should absolutely take advantage of them. Remember, however, the tables by no means capture *all* of the good bits. So be sure to “read between the lines” (of the tables) too..

As for the notes in the margin... They are, strictly, unnecessary: Byron’s great poem remains “the most readable poem of its length ever written” (*Virginia Wolf*) and “by far the greatest comic poem in English” (*Germaine Greer*). My notes and the illustrations are meant only to refresh the jokes, jibes, historical and literary references of ***Don⚔Juan*** for readers 200 years later.

I owe a great debt to Peter Cochran’s extensive commentary (***PC*** in the text); to the notes in the Steffan/Penguin edition, and; to the footnotes that Dr Isaac Asimov (***IA*** in the text) provides in his beautiful edition of ***Don⚔Juan*** illustrated by Milton Glaser (Doubleday, 1973).

All the other stuff and remaining *errors* are mine. I’d be grateful to any reader who would let me know of such faults using the contact details at petergallagher.net.

This PDF edition of ***Don⚔Juan*** has been prepared for reading on-screen using any of the popular & free PDF readers. The file will display on a phone screen, but it may be hard to read.

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The Contents

Canto I Don Juan is born in Seville to the unwary, philandering, Don José and his 'learnéd' wife, Donna Inez. José dies when Juan is young leaving Inez to raise him according to strict principles that leave Juan with no knowledge of anything practical, much less biological. Donna Julia, 23 years old and married to the much older Don Alfonso (a former beau of Inez), falls for the handsome, 16-year old Juan. Although she resists the temptation at first, Julia seduces Juan. Don Alfonso, suspecting that his wife may be having an affair, bursts into their bedroom one night, followed by a lawyer and witnesses. Julia and her servant hide Juan under the covers of the bed just in time. Farcical scenes ensue. Finally, Juan is discovered. After a brief struggle with Alfonso, he easily prevails and flees into the night. To dampen scandal, Inez sends Juan off on a sea-voyage 'to improve his morals', while Julia withdraws to a nunnery.

Canto II The ship on which Juan leaves Spain is wrecked by a storm in the Gulf of Lion. The crew, Juan, and his entourage take to a boat. As hunger and thirst take their toll on the marooned sailors, they resolve to kill one of their number and eat him. The lot falls to Juan's tutor. Only Juan refuses to join in the ghastly feast. Madness and despair grip the survivors. One by one, even in sight of land, they perish or drown. Juan, alone, manages to swim ashore on an Ionian island where he faints, exhausted on the beach. Haidée, the beautiful daughter of the pirate-slaver Lambro, master of the island, discovers Juan. She hides him in a cave and nurses him back to health, teaching him, meanwhile to speak Greek. One night, on the moonlit strand, they consummate their love.

Canto III Juan and Haidée live in unclouded happiness on the island; their love absolute and seemingly eternal. The lovers feast, celebrate, and entertain the island's inhabitants in Lambro's palace, Juan clothed in eastern splendour, Haidée reigning as queen in her absent father's stead. At the height of the festivities, a wandering poet sings of Greece's fallen glory — a celebrated lyric lament for a nation enslaved. Then, abruptly, the idyll is shattered. Lambro, reported dead, returns from his piratical voyages to find his island home transformed into a scene of revelry and his daughter openly living with a stranger. He is a cold, controlled man; his fury, though volcanic, is suppressed beneath a mask of calm. He surveys the scene, recognises the situation, and withdraws to plan. The canto closes on an ominous note of suspended threat as the lovers, oblivious, sleep in each other's arms.

Canto IV Lambro strikes. His armed retainers fall upon Juan; a violent struggle ensues in which Juan fights desperately but is outnumbered, wounded, and put in irons. Haidée throws herself upon her father with a ferocity that astonishes even him, but she is restrained by force. Juan, bleeding and bound, is carried aboard one of Lambro's vessels, destined for the slave markets of the East. Haidée, bereft, slips into a profound delirium — she neither eats nor speaks, locked in a waking dream haunted by visions of Juan. She wastes away and dies, a casualty of love and of her father's pitiless will, her unborn child dying with her. Juan, meanwhile, shackled and grieving, is carried eastward on the slave ship — along with an Italian Opera troupe, betrayed by their Impressario — toward Constantinople and a new chapter of misadventure.

Canto V Juan and his fellow captive Johnson, an English soldier-adventurer, are transported as slaves to Constantinople and put up for sale in the market. Juan is sold to Baba, a corpulent black eunuch acting on behalf of Gulbeyaz — the imperious, beautiful fourth wife of the Sultan — who has been captivated by Juan's looks. Baba dresses Juan in female clothing to smuggle him past the palace guards and into the seraglio. The seductive Gulbeyaz expects her new slave to yield easily to her desires but Juan, still raw with grief for Haidée, instead bursts into tears and refuses — a defiance that first enrages, then disarms, the Sultana. Still, she is on the verge of ordering his death when the Sultan himself arrives to inspect his harem and notices the new "female" slave with disconcerting interest, leaving Juan's disguise and his life in equal peril.

Foreword Afterword Index

Canto I

Juan and Julia in the garden An image from a pirated 1822 edition of Cantos 1-5 of ***Don⚔Juan***, printed & published by George Smeeton and illustrated by Isaac Robert Cruikshank (brother of the more famous George Cruikshank). The scene depicts Don Juan and Donna Julia embracing in the moonlit garden bower (stanzas 113–118).

Some selections from Canto I

Donna Inez introduced: Seville and the Guadalquivir; Don Jose's Hidalgo pedigree	*In virtues nothing earthly could surpass her, / Save thine 'incomparable oil,' Macassar!*	VIII–XVIII
Juan's education — Inez censors the classics: natural history forbidden	*They only add them all in an appendix, / Which saves… the trouble of an index*	XXXIX–XLV
Juan at sixteen; Donna Julia: her appearance, Moorish ancestry, marriage to Don Alfonso	*She was married, charming, chaste, and twenty-three*	LIV–LIX
The seduction scene: the sixth of June; the garden bower, the moonrise; the capitulation	*And whispering 'I will ne'er consent' — consented.*	CII–CXVII
Julia's bedroom; Alfonso's midnight posse; Julia's harangue defending her honour; Juan hidden in the bed	*'T was midnight — Donna Julia was in bed, /… when at her door / Arose a clatter might awake the dead*	CXXXIV–CLXIV
Denouement: the incriminating shoes discovered; the fight; Juan's naked escape over the garden wall	*He fled, like Joseph, leaving it; but there, / I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair.*	CLXV–CLXXXVII
Julia's letter from the convent: a lyrical interlude in a different register — grief without self-pity	*Man's love is of man's life a thing apart, / 'T is woman's whole existence*	CXCII–CXCVIII
Byron's mock-epic programme; poetical "commandments" dismissing contemporary poets; the bribed British Review	*Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope; / Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey*	CXCIX–CCXI

Difficile est proprie communia dicere

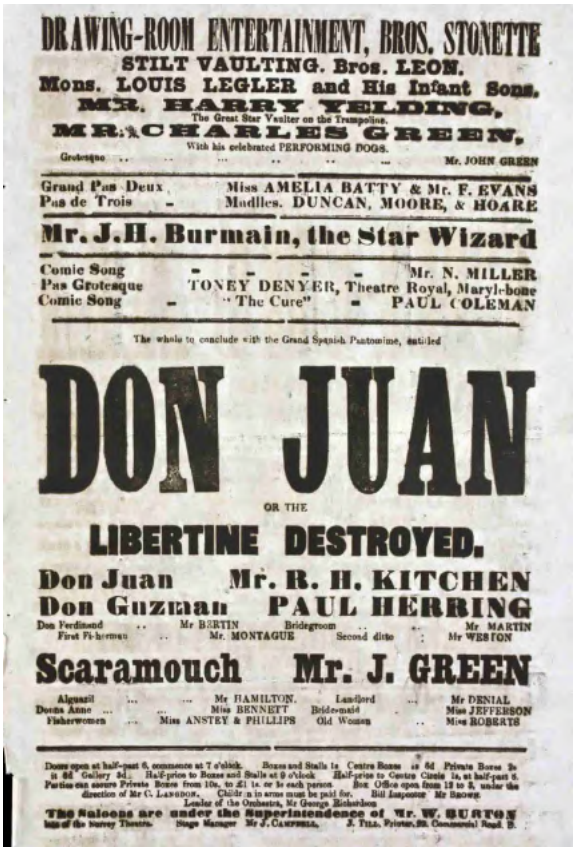
Horace, *Epistola ad Pisones*

"Difficile est. . . " ✧ "It's hard to write about things everyone knows. . . ". The epigraph Byron chose for ***Don⚔Juan*** is, of course, ironic. He writes about what everyone knows, but *won't say*.

I

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan–
We all have seen him, in the pantomime,
Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

gazettes ✧ For example, the *Daily Universal Register* (later *TheTimes*) that printed the Court Circular and military lists as well as journalism.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Pantomime ✒ A play bill advertising a performance (about 1832) at the Pavilion Theatre, Stepney, in the East End of London. There were several operatic versions of the Don Juan pantomime given in pre-Napoleonic London that Byron may have attended.

I want a Hero. . . ✒ *Byron begins with an abrupt focus on his main subject:* ***himself*** *and his ironic disaffection. If he lacks or needs a hero — "want" has both senses — the fault lies with England and the Age. At the height of its post-Napoleonic ascendency in Europe, the country has no heroes; only forgettable pretenders or 'butchers'. He might as well borrow a hero, or villain, from the pantomime: a protagonist whose reputation as a high born rogue and seducer recalls his own, after he fled England in 1816.*

Byron's reputation was only (somewhat) unfair. Juan, however, is nothing like the roué of the Pantomime. Rather, he is modest, earnest, passive and unreflective. He's a dashing lad, but a serial monogamist who has little to say, and when he offers an opinion, it is conventional. Machismo minus.

Of course, epic poems never start in the first person or without a well-known hero. Byron wants to advertise his readiness to flaunt the rules. He's even more explicit about this in Stanza VI — which was the second stanza in an early draft.

But there's another irony in this first phrase, too. Byron's epic never finds a Hero: only ***Heroines****. And several of those.*

II

Vernon, the butcher Cumberland, Wolfe, Hawke,
Prince Ferdinand, Granby, Burgoyne, Keppel, Howe,
Evil and good, have had their tithe of talk,
And fill'd their sign posts then, like Wellesley now;
Each in their turn like Banquo's monarchs stalk,
Followers of fame, "nine farrow" of that sow:
France, too, had Buonaparté and Dumourier
Recorded in the Moniteur and Courier.

Cumberland ✧ William Augustus, beefy son of George II slaughtered the defeated soldiers of the Scots Jacobite army after the battle of Culloden. Hence, "the butcher"

Wellesley ✧ Arthur, Duke of Wellington, whose image appeared on inn-signs and patriotic banners everywhere after his victory over Napoleon in 1815. Byron considered the haughty Duke an icon of Britain's reactionary policies in post-Napoleonic Europe.

Banquo's monarchs ✧ A ghostly train of eight future kings of Scotland, all descended from the murdered Banquo, who appear at Macbeth's banquet table. The "nine farrow" eaten by their mother — here an image of fame consuming its children — is also a quotation from Macbeth (the Witches).

III

Barnave, Brissot, Condorcet, Mirabeau,
Petion, Clootz, Danton, Marat, La Fayette,
Were French, and famous people, as we know:
And there were others, scarce forgotten yet,
Joubert, Hoche, Marceau, Lannes, Desaix, Moreau,
With many of the military set,
Exceedingly remarkable at times,
But not at all adapted to my rhymes.

IV

Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,
And still should be so, but the tide is turn'd;
There's no more to be said of Trafalgar,
'T is with our hero quietly inurn'd;
Because the army's grown more popular,
At which the naval people are concern'd;
Besides, the prince is all for the land-service,
Forgetting Duncan, Nelson, Howe, and Jervis.

V

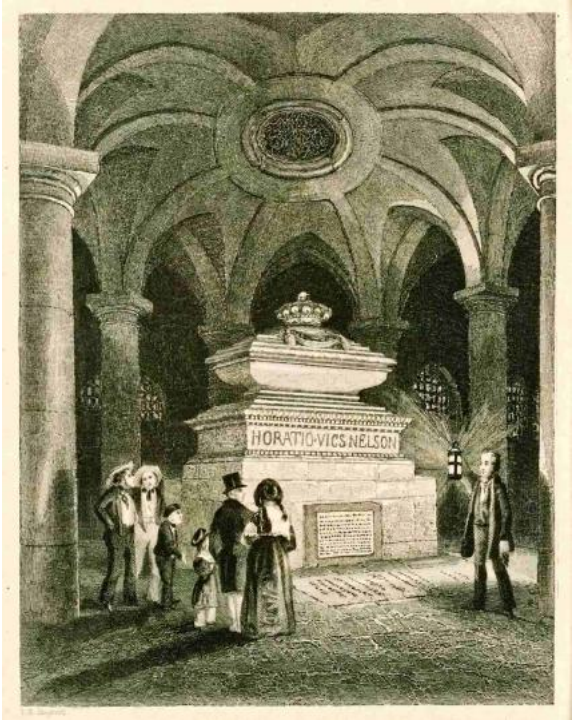
Brave men were living before Agamemnon
And since, exceeding valorous and sage,
A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
But then they shone not on the poet's page,
And so have been forgotten:—I condemn none,
But can't find any in the present age
Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);
So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

VI

Most epic poets plunge "in medias res"
(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road),
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before—by way of episode,
While seated after dinner at his ease,
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

Barnearve. . . La Fayette ✧ Heroes and horrors of the French Revolution thirty years before the publication of ***Don⚔Juan***.

my rhymes ✧ Byron showing off; he has rhymed them all, English and French. His point is that conventional glory fades, but not poetic fame. This, too, is a conventional claim, but in Bryon's case, true. His name is better known two centuries later than most of these.



Quietly inurn'd ✧ Nelson's monumental tomb in the crypt of St Pauls (an 1830 etching). Benedetto da Rovezzano, carved the marble sarcophagus for Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's Chancellor, who died facing charges of treason. Henry then seized it for himself but died before his tomb was ready. Three centuries later, George III donated the orphaned sarcophagus for Nelson's state funeral in 1806.

Brave men. . . ✧ Byron's line is the best remembered "riff" on a verse from the fourth book of Odes by the Roman poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace), a contemporary of Augustus and one of Byron's favourites whom he mentions many times in this and the following Cantos. Horace wrote that many heroes went to their graves unwept and forgotten because they lacked a poet's praise.

In medias res ✧ "Into the middle of the story". This is, in fact, the plan of the heroic epics such as the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Argonautica*, and even *Paradise Lost*. Like these other epics, ***Don⚔Juan*** follows its hero through several loosely linked episodes that seem, at least, to have some historical sanction. But, unlike them, the narrative of Byron's poem is less important and best not examined too closely.

VII

That is the usual method, but not mine—
My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

VIII

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
Famous for oranges and women—he
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
So says the proverb—and I quite agree;
Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,
Cadiz perhaps—but that you soon may see;
Don Juan's parents lived beside the river,
A noble stream, and call'd the Guadalquivir.

IX

His father's name was Jóse—"Don", of course,—
A true Hidalgo, free from every stain
Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source
Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;
A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,
Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,
Than Jóse, who begot our hero, who
Begot—but that's to come—Well, to renew:

X

His mother was a learnéd lady, famed
For every branch of every science known
In every Christian language ever named,
With virtues equall'd by her wit alone,
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
In their own way by all the things that she did.

The regularity of my design ✧ The metric precision of ***Don⚔Juan***, and the regularity of the difficult rhyming pattern, sustained over 19,000 lines of the poem, are a bravura performance. But almost everything else about the poem, although never quite haphazard, is *irregular*. For example, this Canto comprises (roughly) 22 'scenes' of which about half (11-13) are asides or 'diversions' from the narrative. Byron often insisted that he had no plan for his epic; although that's not quite credible, it is nearly so.

Oranges and women ✧ *"Seville is a beautiful town, though the streets are narrow they are clean, we lodged the house of two Spanish unmarried ladies…"* [Letter, to his mother, 11 Aug. 1809] Byron stayed only three days in Seville at the start of his youthful tour of Europe, but he left with warm parting endearments from Donna Josepha, his hostess — and with a tress of her hair.

The Guadalqivir ✒ An 18th century view of the river near the Golden Tower of Seville, by Bossuet. Bryon's jokey anglicised pronunciation — he keeps it up throughout the poem — completes an unlikely rhyme.

Gothic gentlemen of Spain ✧ A Spanish Hidalgo was of "pure blood". He had no tinge of Moorish or Jewish ancestors but traced his family line much earlier to the period when Spain was ruled by the Visigoths. Byron's letters show him entranced, however, by the exotic beauty of dark-eyed Spanish women whose blood-line was altogether more interesting.

XI

Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart
All Calderon and greater part of Lopé,
So that if any actor miss'd his part
She could have served him for the prompter's copy;
For her Feinagle's were an useless art,
And he himself obliged to shut up shop — he
Could never make a memory so fine as
That which adorn'd the brain of Donna Inez.

XII

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic all,
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy —her morning dress was dimity,
Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

` *She knew the Latin. . .*

CALDERON. . . LOPÉ ✧ Prolific Spanish dramatists of the 17th century

FEINAGLES ✒ Gregor von Feinagle, a mysterious German Professor and whist expert, visited London in 1812 to sell subscription lectures on a "system" for improving memory. This illustration of his "topographic" mnemonic — where memory prompts are organised as if in a floor-plan — is from his 1812 book *The Art of Memory*

ATTIC ✧ Dry, laconic, delicate. Perhaps not very funny.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY ✒ In 1817, before he began ***Don⚔Juan***, Byron had drafted a novel — never published — that his friend Cam Hobhouse described as a "transparent recounting of the separation with a Spanish setting". In the novel, Lady Byron figured as "Donna Josepha" (q.v.); Byron's character was called "Don Julian".
Hobhouse among others urged Byron to drop the portrait of the Inez/José marriage from his draft of ***Don⚔Juan***. They thought it a too-obvious reference to Annabella and himself. It has some resemblance, too, to the marriage of Catherine Gordon of Gight — Byron's tempestuous mother — and his run-away wastrel of a father, "Mad Jack", who abandoned his family and died when Byron was only three.

Douglas Fairbanks' final, funny, self-referential film,*The Private Life of Don Juan*, is available free from the Internet Archive.

XIII

She knew the Latin—that is, “the Lord’s prayer,"
And Greek—the alphabet—I’m nearly sure;
She read some French romances here and there,
Although her mode of speaking was not pure;
For native Spanish she had no great care,
At least her conversation was obscure;
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,
As if she deem’d that mystery would ennoble ’em.

XIV

She liked the English and the Hebrew tongue,
And said there was analogy between ’em;
She proved it somehow out of sacred song,
But I must leave the proofs to those who’ve seen ’em;
But this I heard her say, and can’t be wrong
And all may think which way their judgments lean ’em,
“’T is strange—the Hebrew noun which means ’I am,’
The English always used to govern d — n."

XV

Some women use their tongues—she “look’d” a lecture,
Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily,
An all-in-all sufficient self-director,
Like the lamented late Sir Samuel Romilly,
The Law’s expounder, and the State’s corrector,
Whose suicide was almost an anomaly—
One sad example more, that “All is vanity"
(The jury brought their verdict in “Insanity").

XVI

In short, she was a walking calculation,
Miss Edgeworth’s novels stepping from their covers,
Or Mrs. Trimmer’s books on education,
Or “Coelebs’ Wife" set out in quest of lovers,
Morality’s prim personification,
In which not Envy’s self a flaw discovers;
To others’ share let “female errors fall,"
For she had not even one—the worst of all.

Her thoughts were theorems ✧ "*Lady Byron had good ideas, but could never express them; wrote poetry also, but it was only good by accident. Her letters were always enigmatical, often unintelligible. She was governed by what she called fixed rules and principles squared mathematically*." Byron quoted by Thomas Moore.

Analogy between ’em ✧ The pseudo-etymological derivation of modern languages from ancient Hebrew is a pious but baseless speculation.

The Hebrew noun ✧ The Hebrew divine name *Yahweh*, anglicised as “Jehovah”, may derive from the verb *hāwāh* to be or exist *i.e.* ‘he that is’. So B. is talking about the imprecation “God Damn". It’s ironic that this is an observation by the sanctimonious Dona Inez.

Sir Samuel Romilly ✒ Solicitor-General of England, a liberal and a legal reformer. Byron’s family retained Romilly as an advisor but, unethically (he claimed *forgetfully*) he agreed to advise Annabella on the separation. He even had a hand in “correcting” Annabella’s letter to Byron demanding separation. Byron never forgave him. When Romilly suicided in November, 1818, following the death of his wife, Byron inserted this bitter verse (“*almost an anomaly…*”) over John Murray’s and Cam Hobhouse’s strong objections.

Coelebs’ Wife ✧ *Coelebs In Search of a Wife* was a popular book by Hannah More that told the story of Coelebs’ search for the perfect wife: the image of his dead mother. A Coelebs’ Wife was therefore the perfect woman.

Female errors ✧ A quote from *The Rape of the Lock*, by Alexander Pope (whom Byron admired), an earlier comic mock-epic.

> If to her share some female errors fall,
> Look on her face and you’ll forget them all.
>
> *(Book II: 17-18)*

XVII

Oh! she was perfect past all parallel—
Of any modern female saint's comparison;
So far above the cunning powers of hell,
Her guardian angel had given up his garrison;
Even her minutest motions went as well
As those of the best time-piece made by Harrison:
In virtues nothing earthly could surpass her,
Save thine "incomparable oil," Macassar!

XVIII

Perfect she was, but as perfection is
Insipid in this naughty world of ours,
Where our first parents never learn'd to kiss
Till they were exiled from their earlier bowers,
Where all was peace, and innocence, and bliss
(I wonder how they got through the twelve hours),
Don Jóse, like a lineal son of Eve,
Went plucking various fruit without her leave.

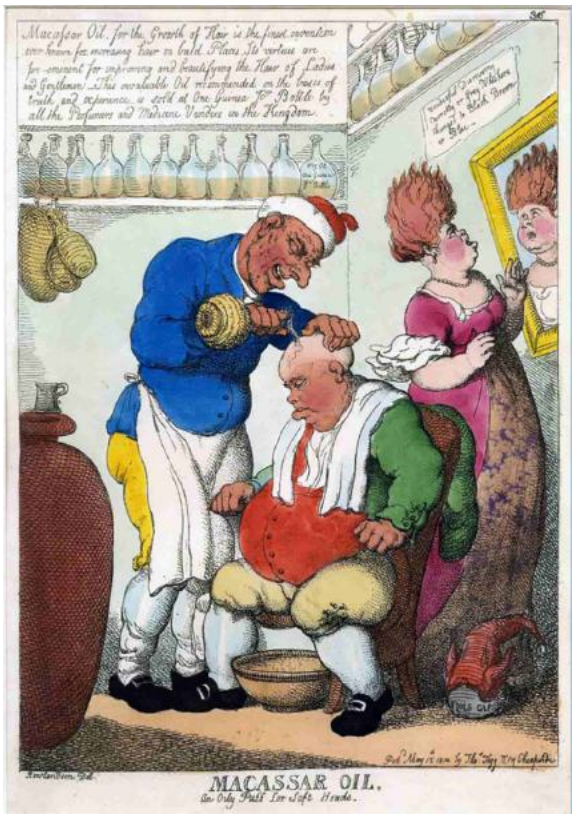
XIX

He was a mortal of the careless kind,
With no great love for learning, or the learn'd,
Who chose to go where'er he had a mind,
And never dream'd his lady was concern'd;
The world, as usual, wickedly inclined
To see a kingdom or a house o'erturn'd,
Whisper'd he had a mistress, some said "two"—
But for domestic quarrels "one" will do.

XX

Now Donna Inez had, with all her merit,
A great opinion of her own good qualities;
Neglect, indeed, requires a saint to bear it,
And such, indeed, she was in her moralities;
But then she had a devil of a spirit,
And sometimes mix'd up fancies with realities,
And let few opportunities escape
Of getting her liege lord into a scrape.

Harrison's timepiece ✧ Captain James Cook carried a (heavy) watch invented by John Harrison on his first voyage to the Pacific to confirm its accuracy in helping to determine longitude during extended sea voyages. Harrison had perfected the mechanism over 45 years of repeated successful demonstrations in an effort to win a public prize that Parliament continually declined to award. He secured the prize only in 1773 after the personal intervention of King George III.



Incomparable Macassar Named for the place where the ingredients were sourced—Makassar, the main port of the island of Sulawesi ("the Celebes") in Indonesia—Rowlands' "incomparable oil" was patent-medicine puffery, as Thomas Rowlandson's 1814 cartoon explains. The anti-Macassar, often a sort of lace doily, protected chair-backs from its greasy stains.

Insipid perfection ✧ At an early point in their intermittent "courtship", Annabella Milbanke composed a memorandum of the qualities she expected in a husband that her aunt, Lady Melbourne, forwarded to Byron. He returned the document observing — accurately enough, it turned out — that Annabella seemed to have been "systematically Clarissa Harlowed into an awkward kind of correctness" by her upbringing. (Clarissa was the very pious heroine of a very long novel by Samuel Richardson).

A mortal of the careless kind ✧ Byron had been ill-behaved in his brief marriage but, like Don José, he "never dream'd" that his wife and her parents were engineering a separation until he received a letter from her father two weeks after she had gone to stay with them in January, 1816.

XXI

This was an easy matter with a man
Oft in the wrong, and never on his guard;
And even the wisest, do the best they can,
Have moments, hours, and days, so unprepared,
That you might "brain them with their lady's fan;"
And sometimes ladies hit exceeding hard,
And fans turn into falchions in fair hands,
And why and wherefore no one understands.

XXII

'T is pity learnéd virgins ever wed
With persons of no sort of education,
Or gentlemen, who, though well born and bred,
Grow tired of scientific conversation:
I don't choose to say much upon this head,
I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?

XXIII

Don Jóse and his lady quarrell'd—"why",
Not any of the many could divine,
Though several thousand people chose to try,
'T was surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
I loathe that low vice—curiosity;
But if there's anything in which I shine,
'T is in arranging all my friends' affairs,
Not having of my own domestic cares.

XXIV

And so I interfered, and with the best
Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;
I think the foolish people were possess'd,
For neither of them could I ever find,
Although their porter afterwards confess'd—
But that's no matter, and the worst's behind,
For little Juan o'er me threw, down stairs,
A pail of housemaid's water unawares.

Oft in the wrong ✧ Byron could be frank about his own shortcomings. Where women were concerned there were many: he spent much of his short life searching for love in the wrong places. But hypocrisy was not among them.

Brain them ✧ A quote from *Henry IV, Part One*. Hotspur threatens a fainthearted nobleman with the punishment most suited to a wimp.

Learnéd virgins ✧ Richard Samuel's picture of *Nine Living Muses in the Temple of Apollo* depicts accomplished women of the Georgian period including Catherine Macaulay (centre right with turban) and Hannah More, author of *Coelebs' Wife* (reading, right foreground).

Hen-peck'd ✧ During Byron's brief marriage, *he* bullied and intimidated his intellectual wife, not *vice versa*, although there was also affection, on both sides. Byron was attracted to strong, self-assured, well-read women such as Lady Melbourne, Madame de Staël, Mary Godwin (Shelley), the pretty young Countess Guiccioli and to passionate Italian women who shared his sexual energy.

Not any of the many could divine ✧ Rumours of cruelty, infidelity and incest with his half-sister, Augusta, swirled around the Byron marriage, helped on, possibly, by the indiscretions of the incendiary, nutty, Lady Caroline Lamb, Byron's former lover. Beset with debts and bailiffs and frustrated by slow progress in the sale of Newstead Abbey — his chief inheritance — Byron was moody, misbehaved, drunken and often cruel to his bride. There is little doubt that he had earlier had an incestuous affair with Augusta. But no proofs ever reached the public.

I interfered ✧ The character of a narrator who has some incidental role in the action disappears soon after this. By the time Juan departs on his adventures, Byron is addressing his audience directly.

XXV

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,
And mischief-making monkey from his birth;
His parents ne'er agreed except in doting
Upon the most unquiet imp on earth;
Instead of quarrelling, had they been but both in
Their senses, they'd have sent young master forth
To school, or had him soundly whipp'd at home,
To teach him manners for the time to come.

XXVI

Don Jóse and the Donna Inez led
For some time an unhappy sort of life,
Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;
They lived respectably as man and wife,
Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,
And gave no outward signs of inward strife,
Until at length the smother'd fire broke out,
And put the business past all kind of doubt.

XXVII

For Inez call'd some druggists and physicians,
And tried to prove her loving lord was "mad";
But as he had some lucid intermissions,
She next decided he was only "bad";
Yet when they ask'd her for her depositions,
No sort of explanation could be had,
Save that her duty both to man and God
Required this conduct—which seem'd very odd.

XXVIII

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,
And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,
All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;
And then she had all Seville for abettors,
Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);
The hearers of her case became repeaters,
Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,
Some for amusement, others for old grudges.

His birth ✧ Byron doesn't trouble himself with dates. It appears that the main action of the poem takes place shortly before the Napoleonic era, but not much. There is just one hint in Stanza XCII that Juan, who is sixteen at the end of this Canto, must have been born in the early 1770s to witness the hot-air balloon craze that swept Europe in the latter part of the 1780s.

Mischief-making monkey ✒ The young Byron — aged seven in this idealised portrait commissioned by his mother — fit this description, too. At his grandmother's house in Banff, Scotland, the locals called him "that little deevil Gordie Byron." At age 13 he was sent to the Harrow School where the bright, good-looking boy who swam and played cricket to spite his lameness — but was also disruptive, lazy and self-centred — was never "soundly whipp'd" by the indulgent masters.

Mad ✧ Like Inez , Annabelle Byron—or, rather, her mother—while preparing grounds for separation behind Byron's back, had sought the option of Byron's physician whether he might be insane. He initially gave his opinion to the contrary but then refused to discuss his patient's condition further.

Her duty ✧ Annabelle, too, in a letter to Augusta Leigh, cited her "duty to God " to proceed with the separation from Byron whom she considered abusive and unfaithful to her — or worse — although she evidently remained emotionally attached to him.

A journal where his faults were noted ✧ Annabelle had composed an analytical "character" of Byron shortly after his first, unsuccessful proposal, that she passed on to him through her aunt, Lady Melbourne either as an explanation of her rejection of him or perhaps as a signal of her continuing interest. Later, in support of the separation claims she drafted a document listing his abuses, bizarre behaviour and cruelty to her.

XXIX

And then this best and weakest woman bore
With such serenity her husband's woes,
Just as the Spartan ladies did of yore,
Who saw their spouses kill'd, and nobly chose
Never to say a word about them more—
Calmly she heard each calumny that rose,
And saw "his" agonies with such sublimity,
That all the world exclaim'd, "What magnanimity!"

XXX

No doubt this patience, when the world is damning us,
Is philosophic in our former friends;
'T is also pleasant to be deem'd magnanimous,
The more so in obtaining our own ends;
And what the lawyers call a "*malus animus*"
Conduct like this by no means comprehends;
Revenge in person's certainly no virtue,
But then 't is not "my" fault, if "others" hurt you.

XXXI

And if your quarrels should rip up old stories,
And help them with a lie or two additional,
I'm not to blame, as you well know—no more is
Any one else—they were become traditional;
Besides, their resurrection aids our glories
By contrast, which is what we just were wishing all:
And science profits by this resurrection—
Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection.

XXXII

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
Then their relations, who made matters worse.
('T were hard to tell upon a like occasion
To whom it may be best to have recourse—
I can't say much for friend or yet relation):
The lawyers did their utmost for divorce,
But scarce a fee was paid on either side
Before, unluckily, Don Jóse died.

Spartan ladies ❧ They were tough. According to the Roman writer Plutarch, Spartan mothers gave their sons departing for war the unsentimental instruction to return "either with your shield or on it", meaning they should come home either victorious or dead. Le Barbier's 1805 painting *drips*, however, with sentimental classicism.

Malus animus ✧ Intention to harm

Friends, Relations ✧ Byron's friends, including Hobhouse (below) and Mme de Staël, his sister Augusta (who remained friends with Annabelle) and his cousin George (who took Annabelle's part) tried to bring about a reconciliation. Their efforts availed little in the face of Annabelle's rigid adherence to her "principles" and her parents' advice.

John Cam Hobhouse ❧ Byron's closest friend from his days at Cambridge University, during his subsequent European tour, his best man at the small, hasty wedding to Annabella and advisor during the separation. Hobhouse became a celebrated radical MP but eventually rose to senior government office and ended his career as a Baron. He played an inglorious role in the destruction of Byron's papers, including a "memoir", after the poet's death.

XXXIII

He died: and most unluckily, because,
According to all hints I could collect
From counsel learnéd in those kinds of laws
(Although their talk's obscure and circumspect),
His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;
A thousand pities also with respect
To public feeling, which on this occasion
Was manifested in a great sensation.

A charming cause ✧ Divorce, which "charmed" the lawyers with rich fees for a public dissection of scandal, bitterness and loss.

XXXIV

But, ah! he died; and buried with him lay
The public feeling and the lawyers' fees:
His house was sold, his servants sent away,
A Jew took one of his two mistresses,
A priest the other—at least so they say:
I ask'd the doctors after his disease—
He died of the slow fever call'd the tertian,
And left his widow to her own aversion.

A fever call'd the tertian ✧ A tertian fever is one that recurrs every two days or so; it is typical of malaria.

XXXV

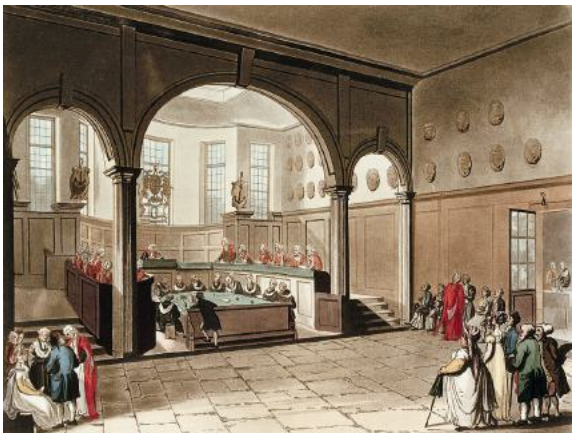
Yet Jóse was an honourable man,
That I must say who knew him very well;
Therefore his frailties I'll no further scan
Indeed there were not many more to tell;
And if his passions now and then outran
Discretion, and were not so peaceable
As Numa's (who was also named Pompilius),
He had been ill brought up, and was born bilious.

Numa ✧ Rome's legendary second King, succeeding Romulus, whose reign was reputed a golden age of peace and prosperity

His desolate hearth ✧ Byron wrote two years after his exile to his friend Thomas Moore that the pain of separation was worse than assassination or poison ("the dagger or the bowl"). The surprise of Annabelle's demand for separation and the accusations that he felt were exaggerated and unjust left him devastated, "standing alone beside his desolate hearth, where all his household gods lay shiver'd round him."

XXXVI

Whate'er might be his worthlessness or worth,
Poor fellow! he had many things to wound him.
Let's own—since it can do no good on earth—
It was a trying moment that which found him
Standing alone beside his desolate hearth,
Where all his household gods lay shiver'd round him:
No choice was left his feelings or his pride,
Save death or Doctors' Commons - so he died.



Doctors' Commons ✒ " *. . . the place where they grant marriage-licenses to love-sick couples, and divorces to unfaithful ones. . .* " (Charles Dickens). Before the reforms of 1857, divorce was a scandalous forensic process that began with a suit of adultery followed by a grant of annulment issued by this Court — formally, *The College of Advocates and Doctors of Law* — whose powers depended on arcane Roman (or 'Civil') Law that encompassed what the Church of England forbade.

XXXVII

Dying intestate, Juan was sole heir
To a chancery suit, and messuages, and lands,
Which, with a long minority and care,
Promised to turn out well in proper hands:
Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,
And answer'd but to nature's just demands;
An only son left with an only mother
Is brought up much more wisely than another.

XXXVIII

Sagest of women, even of widows, she
Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,
And worthy of the noblest pedigree
(His sire was of Castile, his dam from Aragon):
Then for accomplishments of chivalry,
In case our lord the king should go to war again,
He learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery.

XXXIX

But that which Donna Inez most desired,
And saw into herself each day before all
The learnéd tutors whom for him she hired,
Was, that his breeding should be strictly moral;
Much into all his studies she inquired,
And so they were submitted first to her, all,
Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery
To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.

XL

The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
The arts, at least all such as could be said
To be the most remote from common use,
In all these he was much and deeply read;
But not a page of any thing that's loose,
Or hints continuation of the species,
Was ever suffer'd, lest he should grow vicious.

Messuages and lands ❧ Messuages are a house and adjoining buildings. Byron's inheritance at age 10 from his grand-uncle was the rambling, decrepit, haunted Newstead Abbey that he finally sold while in exile only shortly before composing ***Don⚔Juan***. The proceeds barely paid his debts. It is the scene of the last Cantos of ***Don⚔Juan***.

A chancery suit ✧ The Court of Chancery — made infamous a generation later by Dickens' *Bleak House* — granted probate on contested wills.

An only son ✧ Byron was an "only son", just as his wife was an only daughter as were: his only legitimate child, Ada, his natural daughter Allegra, his half-sister, his mother and his sister's mother. Byron thought this significant: "…the fiercest animals have the rarest number in their litters."

Castile and Aragon ❧ The mediaeval kingdoms that divided the territory of Spain were united by the marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in the late 15th century but the territorial connections of the old noble houses lingered into modern times.

XLI

His classic studies made a little puzzle,
Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,
Who in the earlier ages raised a bustle,
But never put on pantaloons or bodices;
His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,
And for their "Æneids", "Iliads", and "Odysseys",
Were forced to make an odd sort of apology,
For Donna Inez dreaded the Mythology.

XLII

Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's "Ode" a good example,
Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn
Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample:
But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with "Formosum Pastor Corydon".

XLIII

Lucretius' irreligion is too strong,
For early stomachs, to prove wholesome food;
I can't help thinking Juvenal was wrong,
Although no doubt his real intent was good,
For speaking out so plainly in his song,
So much indeed as to be downright rude;
And then what proper person can be partial
To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?

XLIV

Juan was taught from out the best edition,
Expurgated by learnéd men, who place
Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,
The grosser parts; but, fearful to deface
Too much their modest bard by this omission,
And pitying sore his mutilated case,
They only add them all in an appendix,
Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index;

Æneid, Iliad and Odyssey ✧ The three greatest ancient epic poems are historical adventures, interspersed with speeches, clever tales, a bit of butchery and a lot of feasting. There are few salacious bits. The *mythology* of Greece —the stories of the Gods, the Titans, and myriad local spirits of rivers and trees; of man's relationships to the Gods and of the Gods' sexual and martial interference in human affairs—belongs to the ancient *lyric* tradition and to the long poems of Homer's contemporary, Hesiod. There, we find quite a bit of naughtiness.

Ovid, Catullus, Sappho ✧ Publius Ovidius Naso (Ovid), and Gaius Valerius Catullus, who lived in the last century before the common era, are two of the greatest lyricists ever. But Ovid's collection, the *Art of Love*, was too racy for the strait-laced emperor Augustus who sent the poet into exile. The inventive lyric poetry of Catullus — who was disappointed in love, bisexual (like Byron) and libidinous — were too frivolous for Roman traditionalists like the renowned orator, stCicero. Sappho, who lived five centuries earlier, was a lyricist from the Greek island of Lesbos. Her work was much-admired in ancient times, but the "Ode" that Byron mentions is the only one of her poems to survive complete; quoted in a critical essay on *The Sublime* attributed to "Longinus", an unidentified author from the first century C.E. Sappho, who seems also to have had male lovers, gave her name to sapphic (lesbian) love.

Virgil's songs ✧ The Roman poet who wrote the epic Æneid also wrote many shorter works including a *pastoral* that tells of the love of "The handsome shepherd Corydon" for a beautiful boy. Byron, too, had liaisons (probably not carnal) with beautiful boys at Cambridge and later (certainly carnal) during his year-long youthful sojourn in Greece. Sodomy was a capital crime in 18th-century England.

Lucretius ✧ Titus Lucretius Carus, writing about the same time as Catullus and Julius Caesar, offered a materialist account of the nature of the world and gave no role to the supernatural powers of the rather silly official Roman pantheon.

Juvenal ✧ Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, was a savage critic of Roman society in the 1st century CE. Most of his sixteen poetic satires—critical of pagan behaviour, although perhaps sometimes tongue-in-cheek—were preserved by monkish copyists of the Christian era. He had many modern imitators especially Samuel Johnson whose two greatest poems *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* were based on Juvenal's Satires III and X.

Martial ✧ Marcus Valerius Martialis, another Roman poet from 1st century CE. A genius of epigram; short, barbed, often obscene, frequently hilarious verses that still amuse and titillate two thousand years later. The NY Review of Books summarised a recent translation of the epigrams as celebrating "recurring themes, such as adult homosexuality, baldness, body odor, cunnilingus, fellatio, misogyny, and pederasty."

XLV

For there we have them all "at one fell swoop,"
Instead of being scatter'd through the Pages;
They stand forth marshall'd in a handsome troop,
To meet the ingenuous youth of future ages,
Till some less rigid editor shall stoop
To call them back into their separate cages,
Instead of standing staring all together,
Like garden gods—and not so decent either.

XLVI

The Missal too (it was the family Missal)
Was ornamented in a sort of way
Which ancient mass-books often are, and this all
Kinds of grotesques illumined; and how they,
Who saw those figures on the margin kiss all,
Could turn their optics to the text and pray,
Is more than I know—But Don Juan's mother
Kept this herself, and gave her son another.

XLVII

Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,
And homilies, and lives of all the saints;
To Jerome and to Chrysostom inured,
He did not take such studies for restraints;
But how faith is acquired, and then ensured,
So well not one of the aforesaid paints
As Saint Augustine in his fine Confessions,
Which make the reader envy his transgressions.

XLVIII

This, too, was a seal'd book to little Juan—
I can't but say that his mamma was right,
If such an education was the true one.
She scarcely trusted him from out her sight;
Her maids were old, and if she took a new one,
You might be sure she was a perfect fright;
She did this during even her husband's life—
I recommend as much to every wife.

Expurgated ✧ As Byron's first biographer, Thomas Moore, pointed out there was such an edition of Martial, published in Amsterdam in 1701. The madness continued into the last century when Loeb's Library published an English translation of the epigrams that left all the naughty bits in *Italian*.

Garden gods ✒ Perhaps Byron was thinking of Canova's sculpture of the Three Graces created initially for Napoleon's empress Josephine in 1814 and re-commissioned in that year by John Russell the Duke of Bedford who saw the original in Canova's Rome studio. Subsequently much copied for garden ornament. This is the Russell version, now in Edinburgh.

Figures on the margin ✒ Decorations on the bottom margin of the Macclesfield Psalter, Psalm 119. Riding the ass backwards was a common mediæval punishment for minor crimes

Jerome and Chrysostom ✧ Influential 4th-century theologians of Christianity. Both known for literary achievements, ascetic lives and attacks on the licentiousness of pagans. Not, of course, light reading.

Augustine's Confessions ✧ Aurelius Augustinus, later bishop of Hippo in North Africa during the disintegration of Roman rule and the invasion of the Vandals (4th century), was a prolific writer and one of the greatest Christian philosophers. His *Confessions*, reflecting on his roaring pagan youth, is a landmark of autobiography.

XLIX

Young Juan wax'd in goodliness and grace;
At six a charming child, and at eleven
With all the promise of as fine a face
As e'er to man's maturer growth was given:
He studied steadily, and grew apace,
And seem'd, at least, in the right road to heaven,
For half his days were pass'd at church, the other
Between his tutors, confessor, and mother.

L

At six, I said, he was a charming child,
At twelve he was a fine, but quiet boy;
Although in infancy a little wild,
They tamed him down amongst them: to destroy
His natural spirit not in vain they toil'd,
At least it seem'd so; and his mother's joy
Was to declare how sage, and still, and steady,
Her young philosopher was grown already.

LI

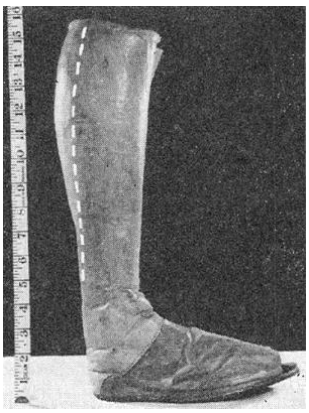
I had my doubts, perhaps I have them still,
But what I say is neither here nor there:
I knew his father well, and have some skill
In character—but it would not be fair
From sire to son to augur good or ill:
He and his wife were an ill-sorted pair—
But scandal's my aversion—I protest
Against all evil speaking, even in jest.

LII

For my part I say nothing—nothing—but
"This" I will say—my reasons are my own—
That if I had an only son to put
To school (as God be praised that I have none),
'T is not with Donna Inez I would shut
Him up to learn his catechism alone,
No—no—I'd send him out betimes to college,
For there it was I pick'd up my own knowledge.

Enviable transgressions ❧ Details from Thomas Couture's lurid vision of Ancients behaving badly (*Romans of the Decadence*, 1847).

Goodliness and grace ✧ Compare Luke 2:40 "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him". The description of young Juan is an idealised portrait of Byron who was charming, clever, handsome…but had a lame right leg that gave him a sliding gait.



Byron's lameness ❧ His deformity was not a club-foot as the *diabolic* myths suggested. In 1959, Denis Browne, an orthopaedic surgeon who examined Byron's prosthetic legging and boot insert reported in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine that Byron suffered a congenital dysplasia (underdevelopment) of his right leg below the knee which left him with a withered calf muscle and a foot that turned slightly sideways on itself (metatarsal varus).

I had my doubts ✧ The narrator speaks to the reader but the "Spanish gentleman" is soon overtaken by Byron's own voice

LIII

For there one learns—'t is not for me to boast,
Though I acquired—but I pass over *that*,
As well as all the Greek I since have lost:
I say that there's the place—but "*Verbum sat*".
I think I pick'd up too, as well as most,
Knowledge of matters—but no matter *what*—
I never married—but, I think, I know
That sons should not be educated so.

LIV

Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,
Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit: he seem'd
Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;
And everybody but his mother deem'd
Him almost man; but she flew in a rage
And bit her lips (for else she might have scream'd)
If any said so, for to be precocious
Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

LV

Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all
Selected for discretion and devotion,
There was the Donna Julia, whom to call
Pretty were but to give a feeble notion
Of many charms in her as natural
As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,
Her zone to Venus, or his bow to Cupid
(But this last simile is trite and stupid).

LVI

The darkness of her Oriental eye
Accorded with her Moorish origin
(Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by;
In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin);
When proud Granada fell, and, forced to fly,
Boabdil wept, of Donna Julia's kin
Some went to Africa, some stay'd in Spain,
Her great-great-grandmamma chose to remain.

College ✒ A view from the rear of the original classroom building at Harrow College where Byron learned Latin, Greek and cricket.

Verbum sat ✧ Short for *verbum sat sapienti* meaning "a word to the wise is enough". Byron loves to hint at his misdemeanours during his years at Trinity College in Cambridge where, in support of a life of enthusiastic dissipation—most of it in London at the plays—he acquired considerable debts to moneylenders. He also found time, however, for reading and the beginnings of his career as a poet.

Flew in a rage ✧ Byron's father, Captain John Byron, had gambled or drunk the inheritance of his wife, Catherine Gordon, and abandoned her in difficult circumstances to bring up his then-three-year-old son alone. His mother was prone to tantrums and rages that led her son to keep his distance.

Donna Julia ✧ Finally, we meet Juan's first Heroine. One scholar of Byron's youthful pilgrimage to Spain, Greece and Turkey has pointed out that the portrait of Julia bears some resemblance to Donna Josepha Beltram, Byron's hostess in Seville .

Her zone to Venus ✒ The goddess of love wore a girdle or *zone* that made her sexually irresistible. In his painting of *Cupid Untying the Zone of Venus* Sir Joshua Reynolds imagines it as a ribbon that offers very little resistance. In the *Iliad*, however, Homer describes it as a belt (*himas*) engraved with aphrodisiac charms.

LVII

She married (I forget the pedigree)
With an Hidalgo, who transmitted down
His blood less noble than such blood should be;
At such alliances his sires would frown,
In that point so precise in each degree
That they bred “in and in”, as might be shown,
Marrying their cousins—nay, their aunts, and nieces,
Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.

LVIII

This heathenish cross restored the breed again,
Ruin’d its blood, but much improved its flesh;
For from a root the ugliest in Old Spain
Sprung up a branch as beautiful as fresh;
The sons no more were short, the daughters plain:
But there’s a rumour which I fain would hush,
’T is said that Donna Julia’s grandmamma
Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

LIX

However this might be, the race went on
Improving still through every generation,
Until it centred in an only son,
Who left an only daughter; my narration
May have suggested that this single one
Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion
I shall have much to speak about), and she
Was married, charming, chaste, and twenty-three.

LX

Her eye (I’m very fond of handsome eyes)
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
Flash’d an expression more of pride than ire,
And love than either; and there would arise
A something in them which was not desire,
But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul
Which struggled through and chasten’d down the whole.

A sort of sin ✧ See the note on page 5 on mixed race among the Spanish nobility.

Boabdil wept ❧ Abu-’Abdullah, called Boabdil by the Spanish, was the last Moorish King of Granada. Overthrown by the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in 1492, he fled to Africa. On a nearby hill, now called *El Último Suspiro del Moro*—the Moor’s Last Sigh—he paused to look back at his city and wept for his loss. His mother is supposed to have sneered: “You do well to weep like a woman for what you could not defend like a man.”

As beautiful as fresh ❧ Romero de Torres’ painting *La Fuensanta* (Woman at the Well) that figured on the 100 Pesta note, when Spain had its own currency, typifies the dark-eyed *Morena* whose features recalled the country’s Moorish inheritance.

An only daughter ✧ Byron was slightly preoccupied by the idea of only children.

LXI

Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
Bright with intelligence, and fair, and smooth;
Her eyebrow's shape was like th' aerial bow,
Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,
Mounting at times to a transparent glow,
As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,
Possess'd an air and grace by no means common:
Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

A dumpy woman ✧ Ungallant! Byron, at 1.74m (5ft 8½in) was not tall and all his life tended to put on weight.

LXII

Wedded she was some years, and to a man
Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;
And yet, I think, instead of such a one
'T were better to have two of five-and-twenty,
Especially in countries near the sun:
And now I think on 't, "mi vien in mente,"
Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

Near the sun ✧ Byron explains reason for spreading the bounty this way in the last couplet of the next stanza. The connection between sunny lands and sexual freedom is a sort of Byronic cliché, no doubt confirmed for him during his youthful journey in Spain, Malta, Greece and Turkey in 1809-10 and certainly practiced during his stay in Venice in 1816-1819

mi vien in mente ✧ Italian: "it occurrs to me..."

LXIII

'T is a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,
And all the fault of that indecent sun,
Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,
But will keep baking, broiling, burning on,
That howsoever people fast and pray,
The flesh is frail, and so the soul undone:
What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,
Is much more common where the climate's sultry.

Adultery... Sultry ✧ A rhyme worthy of Noel Coward and a theory that Byron tested repeatedly in personal experiment.

LXIV

Happy the nations of the moral North!
Where all is virtue, and the winter season
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth
('T was snow that brought St. Anthony to reason);
Where juries cast up what a wife is worth,
By laying whate'er sum in mulct they please on
The lover, who must pay a handsome price,
Because it is a marketable vice.

St Anthony ✧ Byron's memory trips up here. It was the twelfth-century monk, St Francis of Assisi, who used the cold to defeat temptation, not St Anthony, a 3rd-century ascetic.

A marketable vice ✧ A *mulct* is a fine (from the Latin *mulcta*). In Regency England the first step in divorce for reasons of adultery was a civil suit of *Criminal Conversation* bought by the injured husband against his wife's lover in the Court of King's Bench or Common Pleas. Success there meant a fine for the lover and the opportunity for the injured husband to pursue annulment of the marriage in the "ecclesiastical" civil law courts. The final step required an Act of Parliament. Women had no such rights.

LXV

Alfonso was the name of Julia's lord,
A man well looking for his years, and who
Was neither much beloved nor yet abhorr'd:
They lived together, as most people do,
Suffering each other's foibles by accord,
And not exactly either "one" or "two";
Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it,
For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

LXVI

Julia was—yet I never could see why—
With Donna Inez quite a favourite friend;
Between their tastes there was small sympathy,
For not a line had Julia ever penn'd:
Some people whisper but no doubt they lie,
For malice still imputes some private end)
That Inez had, ere Don Alfonso's marriage,
Forgot with him her very prudent carriage;

Forgot with him ✧ A plot thread that Byron raises once more in Stanza 176 but does not pursue far. It raises the intriguing possibility that Juan is Alfonso's son rather than José's; adding an œdipal colour to their eventual battle over Julia. Of course, it also turns mere priggishness on Inez' part to hypocrisy.

LXVII

And that still keeping up the old connection,
Which time had lately render'd much more chaste,
She took his lady also in affection,
And certainly this course was much the best:
She flatter'd Julia with her sage protection,
And complimented Don Alfonso's taste;
And if she could not (who can?) silence scandal,
At least she left it a more slender handle.

LXVIII

I can't tell whether Julia saw the affair
With other people's eyes, or if her own
Discoveries made, but none could be aware
Of this, at least no symptom e'er was shown;
Perhaps she did not know, or did not care,
Indifferent from the first or callous grown:
I'm really puzzled what to think or say,
She kept her counsel in so close a way.

LXIX

Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,
Caress'd him often—such a thing might be
Quite innocently done, and harmless styled,
When she had twenty years, and thirteen he;
But I am not so sure I should have smiled
When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three;
These few short years make wondrous alterations,
Particularly amongst sun-burnt nations.

LXX

Whate'er the cause might be, they had become
Changed; for the dame grew distant, the youth shy,
Their looks cast down, their greetings almost dumb,
And much embarrassment in either eye;
There surely will be little doubt with some
That Donna Julia knew the reason why,
But as for Juan, he had no more notion
Than he who never saw the sea of ocean.

LXXI

Yet Julia's very coldness still was kind,
And tremulously gentle her small hand
Withdrew itself from his, but left behind
A little pressure, thrilling, and so bland
And slight, so very slight, that to the mind
'T was but a doubt; but ne'er magician's wand
Wrought change with all Armida's fairy art
Like what this light touch left on Juan's heart.

LXXII

And if she met him, though she smiled no more,
She look'd a sadness sweeter than her smile,
As if her heart had deeper thoughts in store
She must not own, but cherish'd more the while
For that compression in its burning core;
Even innocence itself has many a wile,
And will not dare to trust itself with truth,
And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

Innocently done ✧ Julia's caresses of the thirteen-year-old Juan may have been innocent but a nine-year-old Byron suffered more harm at the hands of an older woman. His Scottish nurse, Mary (May) Gray who he said beat him until he felt it in his bones, alternated a Calvinist religiosity with sexual abuse of the pretty young boy, climbing into his bed to interfere with him. A note written by Byron's friend Hobhouse after the poet's death suggests the abuse may have continued for some years. The effect on Byron's psyche can only be imagined. We can guess it fed his detestation of religious *hypocrisy* and *cant*. But, like the initially clueless Juan in this passage, the sex-play might also have provoked a precocious sexuality in the young Byron. Gray was dismissed after Byron revealed the assaults to the family attorney and advisor John Hanson. But Hanson never made the nature of Gray's assaults clear to Byron's mother and she delayed firing the woman for several months.

Armida's fairy art ✐ Armida, the beautiful sorceress of Torquato Tasso's 16th-century epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered*—shown here in Gregorio Lazzarini's baroque masterpiece—held the hero Rinaldo in an enchanted garden in a bid to prevent him completing his mission. In Byron's letters, the image is associated with his love affair with Jane Harley, Countess of Oxford in 1812–13, when he stayed in the Harley's country house, Eywood, with the Countess and her beautiful teenaged daughters for weeks at a time. A print of Armida and Rinaldo hung on the wall of his chamber. Tasso's life and brilliant poetic career had much in common with Byron's, whose 1817 poem *The Lament of Tasso* condemns the Italian author's seven years of imprisonment for extravagant behaviour, deemed "madness".

LXXIII

But passion most dissembles, yet betrays
    Even by its darkness; as the blackest sky
Foretells the heaviest tempest, it displays
    Its workings through the vainly guarded eye,
And in whatever aspect it arrays
    Itself, 't is still the same hypocrisy;
Coldness or anger, even disdain or hate,
Are masks it often wears, and still too late.

LXXIV

Then there were sighs, the deeper for suppression,
    And stolen glances, sweeter for the theft,
And burning blushes, though for no transgression,
    Tremblings when met, and restlessness when left;
All these are little preludes to possession,
    Of which young passion cannot be bereft,
And merely tend to show how greatly love is
Embarrass'd at first starting with a novice.

LXXV

Poor Julia's heart was in an awkward state;
    She felt it going, and resolved to make
The noblest efforts for herself and mate,
    For honour's, pride's, religion's, virtue's sake;
Her resolutions were most truly great,
    And almost might have made a Tarquin quake:
She pray'd the Virgin Mary for her grace,
As being the best judge of a lady's case.

LXXVI

She vow'd she never would see Juan more,
    And next day paid a visit to his mother,
And look'd extremely at the opening door,
    Which, by the Virgin's grace, let in another;
Grateful she was, and yet a little sore—
    Again it opens, it can be no other,
'T is surely Juan now—No! I'm afraid
That night the Virgin was no further pray'd.

Poor Julia's heart ❧ In the years 1812–13, the handsome 25-year-old Byron (this is an etching of a now-destroyed 1815 miniature by James Holmes) was approaching the apogee of his literary fame in London; verse such as *The Corsair* was selling in unprecedented numbers. He was swept up in overlapping affairs with infatuated married women of the Regency nobility: with the unstable beauty Lady Caroline Lamb; with the sweet, profligate Jane Harley, Lady Oxford (*fourteen* years his senior); with the pretty but cautious Lady Frances Webster, and; with his easy-going half-sister Augusta Leigh. He was pursued by many others, including Annabella Milbanke. *Almost* all of this he chronicled in an intimate correspondence with Lady Melbourne, Caroline Lamb's mother-in-law and Annabella Milbanke's aunt—who had her own colourful history of extramarital adventures. Byron's confessions, evasions and ironic reflections on himself and his lovers in these letters suggest the source of this comic treatment of Julia's desire and self-torment and self-deception.

Tarquin ❧ Tarquinius Sextus, the youngest son of Rome's last legendary King, Tarquinius Superbus ("the Proud"), raped his cousin's wife, Lucretia, who committed suicide in shame. She is held up as an icon of Roman virtue. According to legend, the republican nobility chased the Tarquins from power when the crime was revealed.

LXXVII

She now determined that a virtuous woman
Should rather face and overcome temptation,
That flight was base and dastardly, and no man
Should ever give her heart the least sensation;
That is to say, a thought beyond the common
Preference, that we must feel upon occasion
For people who are pleasanter than others,
But then they only seem so many brothers.

LXXVIII

And even if by chance—and who can tell?
The devil's so very sly—she should discover
That all within was not so very well,
And, if still free, that such or such a lover
Might please perhaps, a virtuous wife can quell
Such thoughts, and be the better when they're over;
And if the man should ask, 't is but denial:
I recommend young ladies to make trial.

LXXIX

And then there are such things as love divine,
Bright and immaculate, unmix'd and pure,
Such as the angels think so very fine,
And matrons who would be no less secure,
Platonic, perfect, "just such love as mine;"
Thus Julia said—and thought so, to be sure;
And so I'd have her think, were I the man
On whom her reveries celestial ran.

LXXX

Such love is innocent, and may exist
Between young persons without any danger.
A hand may first, and then a lip be kist;
For my part, to such doings I'm a stranger,
But hear these freedoms form the utmost list
Of all o'er which such love may be a ranger:
If people go beyond, 't is quite a crime,
But not my fault—I tell them all in time.

Platonic ✧ The influential 15th-century Italian philosopher and astrologer Marsilio Ficino borrowed this idea from the *Symposium* of the Greek philosopher Plato, where he proposes a kind of non-erotic love of virtue and character that in a semi-mystical way mirrors "perfect" love of the divine. Plato referred only to the love of men or boys since love for women was presumed, unavoidably, to be marred by erotic desire. Byron's point here and below is that the idea of such a love, shorn of desire, is easily enlisted in the cause of self-deception.

Augusta Leigh ❧ *"I have never ceased nor can cease to feel for a moment that perfect & boundless attachment which bound & binds me to you — which renders me utterly incapable of real love for any other human being…"* Byron to his half-sister, from Venice, May 1819; three years after he fled England forever. He loved her more sincerely than any other, but their "crime" preyed on his conscience.

LXXXI

Love, then, but love within its proper limits,
Was Julia's innocent determination
In young Don Juan's favour, and to him its
Exertion might be useful on occasion;
And, lighted at too pure a shrine to dim its
Ethereal lustre, with what sweet persuasion
He might be taught, by love and her together—
I really don't know what, nor Julia either.

LXXXII

Fraught with this fine intention, and well fenced
In mail of proof — her purity of soul —
She, for the future of her strength convinced.
And that her honour was a rock, or mole,
Exceeding sagely from that hour dispensed
With any kind of troublesome control;
But whether Julia to the task was equal
Is that which must be mention'd in the sequel.

Mail of proof ✧ That is, Julia's purity was—she thought—proven "chain mail armour" protecting her honour.

LXXXIII

Her plan she deem'd both innocent and feasible,
And, surely, with a stripling of sixteen
Not scandal's fangs could fix on much that's seizable,
Or if they did so, satisfied to mean
Nothing but what was good, her breast was peaceable—
A quiet conscience makes one so serene!
Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded
That all the Apostles would have done as they did.

LXXXIV

And if in the mean time her husband died,
But Heaven forbid that such a thought should cross
Her brain, though in a dream! (and then she sigh'd)
Never could she survive that common loss;
But just suppose that moment should betide,
I only say suppose it—*inter nos*.
(This should be *entre nous*, for Julia thought
In French, but then the rhyme would go for naught.)

Inter nos, entre nous ✧ Both expressions mean "between us", the first in Latin the second in French. Byron loves to wink at his audience about the artifice of his verses; boasting, of course.

LXXXV

I only say suppose this supposition:
Juan being then grown up to man's estate
Would fully suit a widow of condition,
Even seven years hence it would not be too late;
And in the interim (to pursue this vision)
The mischief, after all, could not be great,
For he would learn the rudiments of love,
I mean the "seraph" way of those above.

LXXXVI

So much for Julia. Now we'll turn to Juan.
Poor little fellow! he had no idea
Of his own case, and never hit the true one;
In feelings quick as Ovid's Miss Medea,
He puzzled over what he found a new one,
But not as yet imagined it could be
Thing quite in course, and not at all alarming,
Which, with a little patience, might grow charming.

LXXXVII

Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow,
His home deserted for the lonely wood,
Tormented with a wound he could not know,
His, like all deep grief, plunged in solitude:
I'm fond myself of solitude or so,
But then, I beg it may be understood,
By solitude I mean a sultan's, not
A hermit's, with a haram for a grot.

LXXXVIII

"Oh Love! in such a wilderness as this,
Where transport and security entwine,
Here is the empire of thy perfect bliss,
And here thou art a god indeed divine."
The bard I quote from does not sing amiss,
With the exception of the second line,
For that same twining "transport and security"
Are twisted to a phrase of some obscurity.

Ovid's Miss Medea At the start of Book VII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Medea, the daughter of the King of Colchis (on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea) — possibly the bloodiest sorceress in mythic history — falls for the Greek hero Jason who has come to bargain for the Golden Fleece then in the King's possession. In Ovid's poem, Medea is puzzled by her own infatuation, blaming the gods for making her love a stranger so passionately and against her inclination. A woman of action, Medea helps Jason win the fleece — in part by helping him kill the sleepless dragon that guards it, as seen in Carle Van Loo's painting — and flees Colchis with him, killing her younger brother in the escape. When, years later, Jason tires of her she takes revenge on him by killing their children and goes on to more bloody adventures in Athens. In his letters, Byron compares the unstable Caroline Lamb to Medea.

The bard I quote from ✧ . . . was the Scots poet Thomas Campbell, from the first few lines of the third Canto of his 1809 poem *Gertrude of Wyoming*. Campbell's poem — a mawkish account of a bloody 1778 battle in the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania between the American patriot militia and the British army with their Iroquois allies — was widely praised at the time although Byron's mockery of his friend's twisted syntax is well-deserved. Byron met Campbell early in his career, shortly after the publication of *Childe Harold* had made him famous. He esteemed the Scotsman highly, proposing in the Dedication to ***Don⚔Juan*** that his fame — like that of Samuel Rogers and Anacreon Moore and George Crabbe — would rival the fame of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey.

LXXXIX

The poet meant, no doubt, and thus appeals
To the good sense and senses of mankind,
The very thing which every body feels,
As all have found on trial, or may find,
That no one likes to be disturb'd at meals
Or love.—I won't say more about "entwined"
Or "transport," as we knew all that before,
But beg'security' will bolt the door.

XC

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks,
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
Himself at length within the leafy nooks
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;
There poets find materials for their books,
And every now and then we read them through,
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

XCI

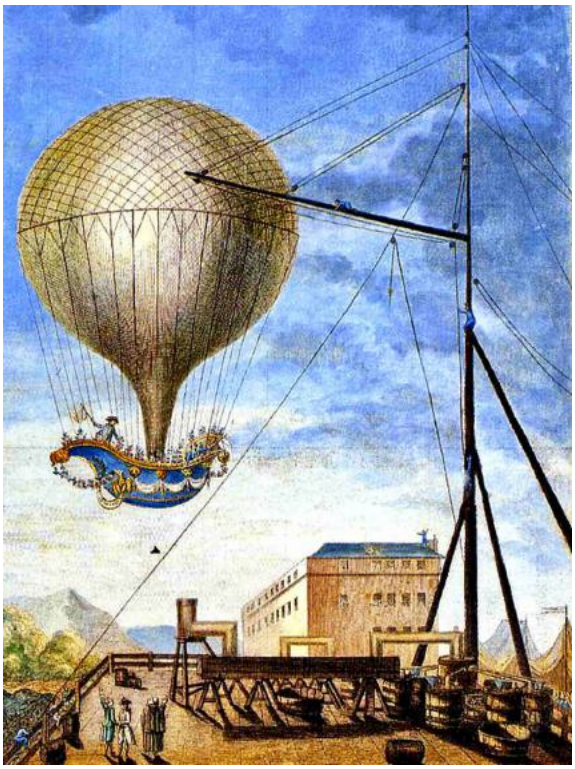
He, Juan (and not Wordsworth), so pursued
His self-communion with his own high soul,
Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,
Had mitigated part, though not the whole
Of its disease; he did the best he could
With things not very subject to control,
And turn'd, without perceiving his condition,
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

XCII

He thought about himself, and the whole earth
Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,
And how the deuce they ever could have birth;
And then he thought of earthquakes, and of wars,
How many miles the moon might have in girth,
Of air-balloons, and of the many bars
To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies;—
And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

Unintelligible Wordsworth ✧ Byron claimed to be baffled by Wordsworth's philosophical meanderings, mocked his banalities and deplored the *longueurs* of poems such as *The Excursion*. He thought Wordsworth failed to make the most of his own talents and, above all, he despised the Toryism and self-absorption of the *Laker* poets, including Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey.

High soul ✧ Wordsworth's longer poems refer, obscurely, to his own or others' "high-soul" as if to some grandeur of spirit or perhaps to echoes of a mystical pantheism or monadism that Coleridge also tried to express in his *Eolian Harp*. Juan's self-absorbed, puerile daydreams at least resolve themselves into more concrete puzzles (next stanza).



Air-balloons ✒ The Montgolfier brothers' famous experiment with an unmanned balloon made of sackcloth held together by 1,800 buttons took place in June 1783. The poster shows a flight by two aviators at Nantes (France) one year later in a 10m hydrogen balloon. By the end of the decade, ballooning was a continent-wide mania.

XCIII

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
Which some are born with, but the most part learn
To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
'T was strange that one so young should thus concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
If *you* think 't was philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

Puberty assisted ✧ A rather surprising psychological realism from one of the icons of romantic youth?

XCIV

He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,
And heard a voice in all the winds; and then
He thought of wood-nymphs and immortal bowers,
And how the goddesses came down to men:
He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,
And when he look'd upon his watch again,
He found how much old Time had been a winner—
He also found that he had lost his dinner.

XCV

Sometimes he turn'd to gaze upon his book,
Boscan, or Garcilasso;—by the wind
Even as the page is rustled while we look,
So by the poesy of his own mind
Over the mystic leaf his soul was shook,
As if 't were one whereon magicians bind
Their spells, and give them to the passing gale,
According to some good old woman's tale.

Boscan or Garcilasso ✧ Spanish poets of the 16th century; both wrote in a romantic Italian vein.

XCVI

Thus would he while his lonely hours away
Dissatisfied, nor knowing what he wanted;
Nor glowing reverie, nor poet's lay,
Could yield his spirit that for which it panted,
A bosom whereon he his head might lay,
And hear the heart beat with the love it granted,
With—several other things, which I forget,
Or which, at least, I need not mention yet.

other things, which I forget ✧ *Aposiopesis* or *breaking off* in midstream: a favorite trick of Byron's. Here, he coyly leaves room for the reader's imagination to supply the "other things" for which Juan's spirit "panted" (panting spirits!?). Then, again, two stanzas later (XCVIII) he is at it again, claiming to have forgotten his Commandments.

XCVII

Those lonely walks, and lengthening reveries,
    Could not escape the gentle Julia's eyes;
She saw that Juan was not at his ease;
    But that which chiefly may, and must surprise,
Is, that the Donna Inez did not tease
    Her only son with question or surmise:
Whether it was she did not see, or would not,
Or, like all very clever people, could not.

XCVIII

This may seem strange, but yet 't is very common;
    For instance—gentlemen, whose ladies take
Leave to o'erstep the written rights of woman,
    And break the—Which commandment is 't they break?
(I have forgot the number, and think no man
    Should rashly quote, for fear of a mistake.)
I say, when these same gentlemen are jealous,
They make some blunder, which their ladies tell us.

Written rights of woman ✧ "*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" was a groundbreaking declaration of women's human rights— for example to an education — based on their moral equality with men, published in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of Mary Shelley. These unexceptional ideas, formed against the background of the French Revolution, had no sanction in the conservative society of Regency England.
To the extent that a married woman had any social or economic rights in early 19th-century law they were entirely subordinate to the wishes of her husband. Still, as Byron's poem went to press, these prejudices were about to come under strong attack. In 1820, many women (and men) of the rising British bourgeoisie indignantly protested George IV's efforts to prevent his estranged wife Caroline from joining him on the throne by trying her in Parliament for adultery. The King's hypocrisy did much to strengthen support for the idea of rights for (married) women.

XCIX

A real husband always is suspicious,
    But still no less suspects in the wrong place,
Jealous of some one who had no such wishes,
    Or pandering blindly to his own disgrace,
By harbouring some dear friend extremely vicious;
    The last indeed's infallibly the case:
And when the spouse and friend are gone off wholly,
He wonders at their vice, and not his folly.

Which commandment ✧ It is the seventh, forbidding adultery. Byron knew the Bible well from his earliest years, but scarcely had an adult romance that was *not* adulterous. His contemporary readers, knowing the deplorable morals of the fashionable classes during the Regency, no doubt assumed this. But none of the noble husbands he cuckolded were in any position — or mind — to charge him with it. This is another *convenient* apostopesis

C

Thus parents also are at times short-sighted;
    Though watchful as the lynx, they ne'er discover,
The while the wicked world beholds delighted,
    Young Hopeful's mistress, or Miss Fanny's lover,
Till some confounded escapade has blighted
    The plan of twenty years, and all is over;
And then the mother cries, the father swears,
And wonders why the devil he got heirs.

Young Hopeful. . . Miss Fanny ✧ Stock characters from 18th century drama.

CI

But Inez was so anxious, and so clear
    Of sight, that I must think, on this occasion,
She had some other motive much more near
    For leaving Juan to this new temptation;
But what that motive was, I sha'n't say here;
    Perhaps to finish Juan's education,
Perhaps to open Don Alfonso's eyes,
In case he thought his wife too great a prize.

CII

It was upon a day, a summer's day;—
    Summer's indeed a very dangerous season,
And so is spring about the end of May;
    The sun, no doubt, is the prevailing reason;
But whatsoe'er the cause is, one may say,
    And stand convicted of more truth than treason,
That there are months which nature grows more merry in,—
March has its hares, and May must have its heroine.

CIII

'T was on a summer's day—the sixth of June:—
    I like to be particular in dates,
Not only of the age, and year, but moon;
    They are a sort of post-house, where the Fates
Change horses, making history change its tune,
    Then spur away o'er empires and o'er states,
Leaving at last not much besides chronology,
Excepting the post-obits of theology.

CIV

'T was on the sixth of June, about the hour
    Of half-past six—perhaps still nearer seven—
When Julia sate within as pretty a bower
    As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven
Described by Mahomet, and Anacreon Moore,
    To whom the lyre and laurels have been given,
With all the trophies of triumphant song—
He won them well, and may he wear them long!

Motive ✧ Another insinuation that Donna Inez was a hypocrite; indulging a sexual intrigue with her own son as bait.

A summer's day ✧ This conventional opening line for a fable introduces a masterful sixteen-verse buildup to the first climax of the Canto, with comic hestitation, indirection, asides, declamations and reversals that resolves, finally on the last word of verse CXVIII.

A very dangerous season ✧ Before the Regency period, the London Season of balls, concerts, dances, parties and horse-racing had coincided with the winter session of the Parliament. But in the first decades of the 19th century, thanks to better roads and transportation between London and the countryside, there was no longer a need to settle in London before the winter snows made the roads impassible. Besides, after 1806, Parliament began its first sitting later; in January. The Royal family, too, was absent from London between November and April. So by the time of the Regency (after 1811), the fashionable classes stayed in the country until the best of the fox-hunting was over. They returned to London only after Easter, usually at the end of March. Then May, the end of spring, was a time for young women to "come out" into society — be presented at Court — and to claim their part as one of the Season's "heroines". The Season concluded on 12 August — the opening of the grouse-hunting season — when Parliament rose for a summer recess.

The sun ✧ Byron's theory that warmth breeds breeding.

March. . . hares ✧ March is the season when hares rut; a surge of sex hormones making them more active and erratic than usual.

Particular in dates ✧ Hah! The first event in ***Don⚔Juan*** that gives us a certain date for the action occurs in Canto VII: the siege of Ismail.

Post-obits of theology ✧ A post-obit is a bond (debt) secured against the estate of the person after death. The post-obits of theology express the idea that the "gift" of life is in fact a debt owed to God who extracts an accounting after death; somewhat the lesson of the "parable of the talents" in *e.g.* Matthew 25:14-30

Houri ✧ The refined, chaste and beautiful maids of Islamic legend who greet and serve the faithful (men, probably, but the Quran is not explicit) eternally in heaven. The implication is that they fulfil sexual desires as well. The word derives from a poetic Arabic expression for a woman with "eyes, black like a gazelle". Recall that Julia had large dark eyes.

Anacreon Moore ✧ This is Thomas Moore (*q.v.*), whose first verse publication was a translation of one of Byron's favourite ancient lyricists, Anacreon. His once-popular work "*Lalla Rookh*" (1817), comprised prose and verse on an oriental theme; the marriage of a daughter of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Hobhouse thought Byron did not like the poem nearly as much as his praise of it suggested.

CV

She sate, but not alone; I know not well
How this same interview had taken place,
And even if I knew, I should not tell—
People should hold their tongues in any case;
No matter how or why the thing befell,
But there were she and Juan, face to face—
When two such faces are so, 't would be wise,
But very difficult, to shut their eyes.

CVI

How beautiful she look'd! her conscious heart
Glow'd in her cheek, and yet she felt no wrong.
Oh Love! how perfect is thy mystic art,
Strengthening the weak, and trampling on the strong,
How self-deceitful is the sagest part
Of mortals whom thy lure hath led along—
The precipice she stood on was immense,
So was her creed in her own innocence.

CVII

She thought of her own strength, and Juan's youth,
And of the folly of all prudish fears,
Victorious virtue, and domestic truth,
And then of Don Alfonso's fifty years:
I wish these last had not occurr'd, in sooth,
Because that number rarely much endears,
And through all climes, the snowy and the sunny,
Sounds ill in love, whate'er it may in money.

CVIII

When people say, "I've told you "fifty" times,"
They mean to scold, and very often do;
When poets say, "I've written "fifty" rhymes,"
They make you dread that they'll recite them too;
In gangs of "fifty", thieves commit their crimes;
At "fifty" love for love is rare, 't is true,
But then, no doubt, it equally as true is,
A good deal may be bought for "fifty" Louis.

A good deal ✧ If "deal" is read as meaning a part or portion of the whole then a possible referent is "love", two lines above. Thus: "a whole lot of lovin'". But a deal is also a bargain — for "love" in this case. A *Louis* was a gold coin last issued by Louis XVI in 1792 bearing his likeness on the obverse, worth approximately £1, at the time.

CIX

Julia had honour, virtue, truth, and love,
For Don Alfonso; and she inly swore,
By all the vows below to powers above,
She never would disgrace the ring she wore,
Nor leave a wish which wisdom might reprove;
And while she ponder'd this, besides much more,
One hand on Juan's carelessly was thrown,
Quite by mistake—she thought it was her own;

CX

Unconsciously she lean'd upon the other,
Which play'd within the tangles of her hair:
And to contend with thoughts she could not smother
She seem'd by the distraction of her air.
'T was surely very wrong in Juan's mother
To leave together this imprudent pair,
She who for many years had watch'd her son so—
I'm very certain "mine" would not have done so.

CXI

The hand which still held Juan's, by degrees
Gently, but palpably confirm'd its grasp,
As if it said, "Detain me, if you please;"
Yet there's no doubt she only meant to clasp
His fingers with a pure Platonic squeeze:
She would have shrunk as from a toad, or asp,
Had she imagined such a thing could rouse
A feeling dangerous to a prudent spouse.

CXII

I cannot know what Juan thought of this,
But what he did, is much what you would do;
His young lip thank'd it with a grateful kiss,
And then, abash'd at its own joy, withdrew
In deep despair, lest he had done amiss,—
Love is so very timid when 't is new:
She blush'd, and frown'd not, but she strove to speak,
And held her tongue, her voice was grown so weak.

I cannot know ✧ Of course Byron *could know* what Juan thinks; but he's not interested. Juan has little or no interior life. Still, B. *is interested* in reminding the reader that Juan behaves just as anyone would.

CXIII

The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon:
The devil's in the moon for mischief; they
Who call'd her CHASTE, methinks, began too soon
Their nomenclature; there is not a day,
The longest, not the twenty-first of June,
Sees half the business in a wicked way
On which three single hours of moonshine smile—
And then she looks so modest all the while.

Chaste ✧ Conventional. The *Casta Diva* ("Chaste Goddess") of Bellini's opera *Norma* is the moon. The Romans venerated Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt, as goddess of the moon.

Twenty-first of June ✧ Midsummer night; Shakespeare's play, too, bathed by the light of the moon whose influence ties the four stories of the Night together.

CXIV

There is a dangerous silence in that hour,
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all itself, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self-control;
The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
Sheds beauty and deep softness o'er the whole,
Breathes also to the heart, and o'er it throws
A loving languor, which is not repose.

CXV

And Julia sate with Juan, half embraced
And half retiring from the glowing arm,
Which trembled like the bosom where 't was placed;
Yet still she must have thought there was no harm,
Or else 't were easy to withdraw her waist;
But then the situation had its charm,
And then—— God knows what next—I can't go on;
I'm almost sorry that I e'er begun.

CXVI

Oh Plato! Plato! you have paved the way,
With your confounded fantasies, to more
Immoral conduct by the fancied sway
Your system feigns o'er the controulless core
Of human hearts, than all the long array
Of poets and romancers:—You're a bore,
A charlatan, a coxcomb—and have been,
At best, no better than a go-between.

Plato! ✧ The philosopher was not really responsible for the nonsense about "platonic" love promulgated in his name and certainly did not propose a "system". But the outburst allows Byron to impose a further dramatic delay in the climax of the scene.

A go-between ✧ A panderer, pimp

CXVII

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,
    Until too late for useful conversation;
The tears were gushing from her gentle eyes,
    I wish indeed they had not had occasion,
But who, alas! can love, and then be wise?
    Not that remorse did not oppose temptation;
A little still she strove, and much repented
And whispering "I will ne'er consent"—consented.

CXVIII

'T is said that Xerxes offer'd a reward
    To those who could invent him a new pleasure:
Methinks the requisition's rather hard,
    And must have cost his majesty a treasure:
For my part, I'm a moderate-minded bard,
    Fond of a little love (which I call leisure);
I care not for new pleasures, as the old
Are quite enough for me, so they but hold.

Xerxes ✧ And now for something completely different... a *non-sequitur* to relieve the tension and to signal a change of scene. Xerxes was the great Persian king of the first third of the 5th century BCE whom the Spartans resisted at Thermopylae and whom the Athenians defeated in the naval battle of Salamis and again at the battle of Plataea. This makes him, as Byron scholar Peter Cochran says, a "prominent member of Byron's historical bestiary." Romans of the Republic (*e.g.* Cicero) retold this fable about Xerxes to illustrate what they considered the essential flakiness of Eastern ways.

CXIX

Oh Pleasure! you are indeed a pleasant thing,
    Although one must be damn'd for you, no doubt:
I make a resolution every spring
    Of reformation, ere the year run out,
But somehow, this my vestal vow takes wing,
    Yet still, I trust it may be kept throughout:
I'm very sorry, very much ashamed,
And mean, next winter, to be quite reclaim'd.

Vestal vow ✧ The Roman priestesses who maintained the eternal flame of the Temple of Vesta — the supposed source of every household hearth — took a vow of chastity for the three decades of their service.

CXX

Here my chaste Muse a liberty must take—
    Start not! still chaster reader—she'll be nice hence—
Forward, and there is no great cause to quake;
    This liberty is a poetic licence,
Which some irregularity may make
    In the design, and as I have a high sense
Of Aristotle and the Rules, 't is fit
To beg his pardon when I err a bit.

Aristotle and the Rules ✧ In the *Poetics*, Aristotle, the father of both physical science and the dramatic arts, laid down rules of composition for epic poetry and described the "unities" of action, time and place that should govern drama. The unities were intended to enhance the credibility of a narrative by ensuring that the events comprising the drama could, imaginatively, have taken place in the time-frame and location of the depiction (called "continuity" in film dramas). Needless to say, Byron's claimed respect for the Aristotelian rules in ***Don⚔Juan*** is humbug. He ignores the rules of Epic composition — especially the stricture forbidding the poet to speak in his own voice — and, although he pretends to "err" in his respect for the unities by leaping-over several months, his change of scene is perfectly in line with Aristotle's rules.

CXXI

This licence is to hope the reader will
Suppose from June the sixth (the fatal day,
Without whose epoch my poetic skill
For want of facts would all be thrown away),
But keeping Julia and Don Juan still
In sight, that several months have pass'd; we'll say
'T was in November544, but I'm not so sure
About the day—the era's more obscure.

CXXII

We'll talk of that anon.—'T is sweet to hear
At midnight on the blue and moonlit deep
The song and oar of Adria's gondolier,
By distance mellow'd, o'er the waters sweep;
'T is sweet to see the evening star appear;
'T is sweet to listen as the night-winds creep
From leaf to leaf; 't is sweet to view on high
The rainbow, based on ocean, span the sky.

CXXIII

'T is sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark
Bay deep-mouth'd welcome as we draw near home;
'T is sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come;
'T is sweet to be awaken'd by the lark,
Or lull'd by falling waters; sweet the hum
Of bees, the voice of girls, the song of birds,
The lisp of children, and their earliest words.

CXXIV

Sweet is the vintage, when the showering grapes
In Bacchanal profusion reel to earth,
Purple and gushing: sweet are our escapes
From civic revelry to rural mirth;
Sweet to the miser are his glittering heaps,
Sweet to the father is his first-born's birth,
Sweet is revenge—especially to women,
Pillage to soldiers, prize-money to seamen.

Not so sure about the day ✧ Yet later Byron will assure us that the events he is about to describe caused a scandal on the day after and were written up in "the English newspapers"

T'is sweet to hear... ✧ Byron introduces the climactic scenes of the farce with a bravura performance: a sustained seven-verse *anaphora* — the rhetorical device of repetition (*"'tis sweet... 'tis sweeter"*) at the start of each verse — that builds to a climax as the experiences become more specific and personal. In less expert hands it could be a dull drum, or merely artifice, but Byron undercuts the tone with bathos for comic effect and varies the repetition (*"Dear is..."* in verse 126) when he wants to be more serious. Then, having reached the local climax, marked by yet another rhetorical device, *isocolon* (*"But sweeter still than this, than these, than all..."*), he turns and spins away on a second digression that delays the re-entry of the lovers for a further half dozen stanzas.

Adria's gondolier ✧ Venice is exposed to the Adriatic sea.

CXXV

Sweet is a legacy, and passing sweet
The unexpected death of some old lady
Or gentleman of seventy years complete,
Who've made "us youth" wait too—too long already
For an estate, or cash, or country seat,
Still breaking, but with stamina so steady
That all the Israelites are fit to mob its
Next owner for their double-damn'd post-obits.

Some old lady ✧ Perhaps Byron was thinking of Lady Judith Milbanke (neé Noel), Annabella's mother, whose estate would be divided between himself and Annabella after her death, according to the deed of separation between them. Lady Noel did not like Byron, nor he her. But he grieved for his estranged wife when her mother died in January 1822. As required by the Lady Milbanke's will, Byron assumed the arms of the Noel family and thereafter signed himself as "Noel Byron"; usually by the initials "NB"

us youth ✧ This is the rallying cry of the elderly, fat Falstaff in Henry IV Part One to justify his juvenile (and worse) behavior.

Israelites ✧ Like many others of his class, Byron described the money lenders who fed his excesses at Cambridge and in London at high rates of interest and who had the bailiffs sell-up his furniture and library in his last months in London as "Jews". It was intended as racial abuse, even when it was accurate in an ethnic sense.

CXXVI

'T is sweet to win, no matter how, one's laurels,
By blood or ink; 't is sweet to put an end
To strife; 't is sometimes sweet to have our quarrels,
Particularly with a tiresome friend:
Sweet is old wine in bottles, ale in barrels;
Dear is the helpless creature we defend
Against the world; and dear the schoolboy spot
We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot.

CXXVII

But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
Is first and passionate love—it stands alone,
Like Adam's recollection of his fall;
The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd—all's known—
And life yields nothing further to recall
Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,
No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven
Fire which Prometheus filch'd for us from heaven.

The unforgiven fire ✧ Prometheus, the Titan who stole fire from the Gods and gave it to man, was never forgiven but condemned to eternal torment. Byron compares "first and passionate love" both to Promethean fire and to Adam's knowledge of good and evil. Each transforms the "sinner" forever.

CXXVIII

Man's a strange animal, and makes strange use
Of his own nature, and the various arts,
And likes particularly to produce
Some new experiment to show his parts;
This is the age of oddities let loose,
Where different talents find their different marts;
You'd best begin with truth, and when you've lost your
Labour, there's a sure market for imposture.

a strange animal ✧ Byron emerges from one set of rhetorical asides ("Tis sweet...") only to launch into another digression: a satire on the idea of progress. The connection between the two is the ambiguous fruit of the tree of knowledge ("good and evil") that comprises both carnal and scientific knowledge: "*ambrosial sin*" and Promethean fire. His encyclopædic interests allow Byron to catalog the contrariness of technology that alternately saves and kills in his contemporary "age of oddities let loose" where 'imposture" is more profitable than truth. Man's nature, as revealed by these "wondrous new machines" is perplexing to himself ("pleasure's a sin and sin's a pleasure"). Still he is forced to work out his own destiny by trial and error. Should he arrive at an answer ("The goal gain'd. . ."), however, it will probably come too late.

CXXIX

What opposite discoveries we have seen!
(Signs of true genius, and of empty pockets.)
One makes new noses, one a guillotine,
One breaks your bones, one sets them in their sockets;
But vaccination certainly has been
A kind antithesis to Congreve's rockets,
With which the Doctor paid off an old pox,
By borrowing a new one from an ox.

CXXX

Bread has been made (indifferent) from potatoes;
And galvanism has set some corpses grinning,
But has not answer'd like the apparatus
Of the Humane Society's beginning
By which men are unsuffocated gratis:
What wondrous new machines have late been spinning!
I said the small-pox has gone out of late;
Perhaps it may be follow'd by the great.

CXXXI

'T is said the great came from America;
Perhaps it may set out on its return,—
The population there so spreads, they say
'T is grown high time to thin it in its turn,
With war, or plague, or famine, any way,
So that civilisation they may learn;
And which in ravage the more loathsome evil is—
Their real "lues", or our pseudo-syphilis?

` *This is the patent-age...*

NEW NOSES ❦ Gillray's cartoon shows a surgeon purporting to "cure" *rosacea* or "drinker's nose" with a probe, known as "Perkins' tractors" after the United States quack Dr. Elisha Perkins, who patented them in 1796. They comprised two pointed rods about 10 cm long, made from different kinds of metal. By pulling them across the affected part, the disease was supposed to be yanked out. President George Washington was one of Perkins' many hundreds of customers.

GUILLOTINE ✧ Joseph Guillotin proposed this new machine for execution as a humane alternative to the executioners' axe in 1789, just in time for the French revolutions' bloody excesses of 1793-4.

CONGREVE'S ROCKETS ✧ Sir William Congreve introduced the use of rocket artillery, long used in China, during the British war of 1812 against the rebellious U.S. colonies. The rockets' bright "red glare" — spectacular if not terribly effective — is remembered in Francis Scott Key's ode to the *Star-Spangled Banner* flying above Fort McHenry under British bombardment.

PAID OFF AN OLD POX ❦ In 1796, the English physician Edward Jenner introduced the practice of injecting pus from the blisters caused by the mild disease *vaccinia* or "cowpox", to protect (or *vaccinate*) individuals against the more serious, related, disease of smallpox. Its potential to save millions made vaccination a "kind antithesis" to military massacre but Gillray joked it meant to "have a cow".

CXXXII

This is the patent-age of new inventions
For killing bodies, and for saving souls,
All propagated with the best intentions;
Sir Humphry Davy's lantern, by which coals
Are safely mined for in the mode he mentions,
Tombuctoo travels, voyages to the Poles,
Are ways to benefit mankind, as true,
Perhaps, as shooting them at Waterloo.

CXXXIII

Man's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
'T is pity though, in this sublime world, that
Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure;
Few mortals know what end they would be at,
But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure,
The path is through perplexing ways, and when
The goal is gain'd, we die, you know—and then—

CXXXIV

What then?—I do not know, no more do you—
And so good night.—Return we to our story:
'T was in November, when fine days are few,
And the far mountains wax a little hoary,
And clap a white cape on their mantles blue;
And the sea dashes round the promontory,
And the loud breaker boils against the rock,
And sober suns must set at five o'clock.

CXXXV

'T was, as the watchmen say, a cloudy night;
No moon, no stars, the wind was low or loud
By gusts, and many a sparkling hearth was bright
With the piled wood, round which the family crowd;
There's something cheerful in that sort of light,
Even as a summer sky's without a cloud:
I'm fond of fire, and crickets, and all that,
A lobster-sallad, and champagne, and chat.

GALVANISM ✧ Luigi Galvani, the Italian anatomist, created a sensation in the with his 1780 discovery that electric shocks caused a dead frog's leg muscle tissue to contract. The experiment seemed to contemporary observers to imply that electricity was somehow a "life principle". That idea animates Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein" whose origins were said to be a night that she, Shelley, Byron and his "physician" Polidori had spent composing ghost stories at the Villa Diodati, on the banks of Lake Geneva, in 1816.

UNSUFFOCATED GRATIS ✒ London's Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned, formed in 1774, held that drowning victims could be resuscitated by blowing tobacco smoke into their rectum. It installed a number of these billowed-enema kits along the Thames for that purpose.

THE GREAT ✧ The Great Pox is syphilis that remained incurable until the advent of modern antibiotics in the mid-20 th century; long after vaccination had slowed the spread of small-pox.

CAME FROM AMERICA ✧ There has been a debate about the "foreign" origins of syphilis since the first epidemic outbreak in Naples in 1495 among the armies of the invading French. There is evidence the disease existed in the New World but whether the spirochete *treponema pallidum* — which is also the vector of the tropical disease yaws — previously existed in Europe or whether the crew of Columbus' expedition three years earlier had transmitted the curse remains contentious among biologists.

WAR, OR PLAGUE, OR FAMINE ✧ "Did you ever read *Malthus on Population*? If he be right, war and pestilence are our best friends, to save us from being eaten alive in this 'best of all possible worlds'." Byron to Hodgson, Sept. 1811

LUES ✧ Latin for "the plague"; syphilis was sometimes called the *lues venerea*. Pseudo-syphilis is small-pox. Byron contracted gonorrhoea in Venice in 1817 after strenuous efforts at the *Carnivale*.

CXXXVI

'T was midnight—Donna Julia was in bed,
Sleeping, most probably,—when at her door
Arose a clatter might awake the dead,
If they had never been awoke before,
And that they have been so we all have read,
And are to be so, at the least, once more;—
The door was fasten'd, but with voice and fist
First knocks were heard, then "Madam—Madam—hist!—

CXXXVII

"For God's sake, Madam—Madam—here's my master,
With more than half the city at his back—
Was ever heard of such a curst disaster!
'T is not my fault—I kept good watch—Alack!
Do pray undo the bolt a little faster—
They're on the stair just now, and in a crack
Will all be here; perhaps he yet may fly—
Surely the window's not so "very" high!"

CXXXVIII

By this time Don Alfonso was arrived,
With torches, friends, and servants in great number;
The major part of them had long been wived,
And therefore paused not to disturb the slumber
Of any wicked woman, who contrived
By stealth her husband's temples to encumber:
Examples of this kind are so contagious,
Were "one" not punish'd, "all" would be outrageous.

CXXXIX

I can't tell how, or why, or what suspicion
Could enter into Don Alfonso's head;
But for a cavalier of his condition
It surely was exceedingly ill-bred,
Without a word of previous admonition,
To hold a levee round his lady's bed,
And summon lackeys, arm'd with fire and sword,
To prove himself the thing he most abhorr'd.

Humphry Davy's lantern ✧ Sir Humphrey and Lady Jane Davy were friends of Byron's in London — he first met Mme de Staël at a dinner at Lady Davy's house in Grosvenor Square — and later visited him in Italy. Davy was an autodidact in the best tradition of 18th century science; an early lecturer on galvanism; the discoverer of several metallic elements; an experimenter with Priestly's nitrous oxide gas (he introduced Southey and Coleridge to its recreational use); the first Secretary of the Royal Society, and; the patron of Michael Faraday. His miners' lamp (1815) enclosed the flame in a wire gauze that radiated and dispersed the heat of the flame. This moderated the danger of igniting the explosive methane gas that lurked in coal mines.

Tombuctoo travels ✧ The Malian capital of Tombouctou, on the river Niger, was an ancient hub of caravan routes across the Sahara and a capital of the Songhai empire. In the 15th and 16th centuries it was a wealthy, cosmopolitan centre of trade and learning. Then, after a period of political and economic decline it succumbed to Moroccan invasion in 1590. European explorers early in the 19th century began to re-discover the Saharan region but the Scots explorer A. G. Laing did not reach Tombuouctou until 1826 — eight years after Byron wrote these lines — where Arab traders killed him.

A lobster-sallad, and champagne ✧ Murray's printers first introduced the error of placing a comma between "lobster" and "sallad". It is clear from several mentions in his letters — and from his proof corrections — that Byron meant a favourite collation at any ball; the lobster-salad.

once more ✧ Presumably a reference to the Christian (and Islamic) tradition of a general resurrection of the dead on the "Day of Judgement".

temples to encumber ✧ With a cuckhold's horns. The horns are those of a stag whose female mates are forfeit to any other male that defeats him in battle.

a levee ✧ The ceremony at a monarch's awakening.

CXL

Poor Donna Julia, starting as from sleep
(Mind—that I do not say—she had not slept),
Began at once to scream, and yawn, and weep;
Her maid Antonia, who was an adept,
Contrived to fling the bed-clothes in a heap,
As if she had just now from out them crept:
I can't tell why she should take all this trouble
To prove her mistress had been sleeping double.

CXLI

But Julia mistress, and Antonia maid,
Appear'd like two poor harmless women, who
Of goblins, but still more of men afraid,
Had thought one man might be deterr'd by two,
And therefore side by side were gently laid,
Until the hours of absence should run through,
And truant husband should return, and say,
"My dear, I was the first who came away."

CXLII

Now Julia found at length a voice, and cried,
"In heaven's name, Don Alfonso, what d' ye mean?
Has madness seized you? would that I had died
Ere such a monster's victim I had been!
What may this midnight violence betide,
A sudden fit of drunkenness or spleen?
Dare you suspect me, whom the thought would kill?
Search, then, the room!"—Alfonso said, "I will."

CXLIII

"He" search'd, "they" search'd, and rummaged everywhere,
Closet and clothes' press, chest and window-seat,
And found much linen, lace, and several pair
Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete,
With other articles of ladies fair,
To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat:
Arras they prick'd and curtains with their swords,
And wounded several shutters, and some boards.

CXLIV

Under the bed they search'd, and there they found—
    No matter what—it was not that they sought;
They open'd windows, gazing if the ground
    Had signs or footmarks, but the earth said nought;
And then they stared each other's faces round:
    'T is odd, not one of all these seekers thought,
And seems to me almost a sort of blunder,
Of looking in the bed as well as under.

No matter what ✧ The chamber pot.

CXLV

During this inquisition, Julia's tongue
    Was not asleep—"Yes, search and search," she cried,
"Insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!
    It was for this that I became a bride!
For this in silence I have suffer'd long
    A husband like Alfonso at my side;
But now I'll bear no more, nor here remain,
If there be law or lawyers in all Spain.

CXLVI

"Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,
    If ever you indeed deserved the name,
Is 't worthy of your years?—you have threescore—
    Fifty, or sixty, it is all the same—
Is 't wise or fitting, causeless to explore
    For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?
Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,
How dare you think your lady would go on so?

CXLVII

"Is it for this I have disdain'd to hold
    The common privileges of my sex?
That I have chosen a confessor so old
    And deaf, that any other it would vex,
And never once he has had cause to scold,
    But found my very innocence perplex
So much, he always doubted I was married—
How sorry you will be when I've miscarried!

CXLVIII

"Was it for this that no Cortejo e'er
I yet have chosen from out the youth of Seville?
Is it for this I scarce went anywhere,
Except to bull-fights, mass, play, rout, and revel?
Is it for this, whate'er my suitors were,
I favor'd none—nay, was almost uncivil?
Is it for this that General Count O'Reilly,
Who took Algiers, declares I used him vilely?

Cortejo ✧ Literally, a suitor. The socially accepted lover of a married woman in a society where marriage could be contracted for alliance, money or respectability and love might be sought elsewhere. The Spanish equivalent of the Italian *Cavalier Servente*; a position Byron found himself occupying two years later in his affair with Theresa Guiccioli.

General Count O'Reilly ✧ Alexander O'Reilly, an Irishman, was a lieutenant general in the army of Spain. But Julia slips up, here. O'Reilly's siege of Algiers in 1775 *failed* although 4,000 of his men died in the attempt.

CXLIX

"Did not the Italian "Musico" Cazzani
Sing at my heart six months at least in vain?
Did not his countryman, Count Corniani,
Call me the only virtuous wife in Spain?
Were there not also Russians, English, many?
The Count Strongstroganoff I put in pain,
And Lord Mount Coffeehouse, the Irish peer,
Who kill'd himself for love (with wine) last year.

Cazzani and Corniani ✧ All the names in this verse and the next are fictitious. The first two are Italian inuendis. Cazzani means "little prick" and Corniani, "cuckold"

Lord Mount Coffeehouse ✧ The 1801 Act of Union created many new Irish peers — Castlereagh among them — who were abhorred both by the Irish and by English conservatives. "The Mount" coffee house in Mount St, Mayfair, was owned by John Westbrook, father of Shelley's first wife, Harriet.

CL

"Have I not had two bishops at my feet,
The Duke of Ichar, and Don Fernan Nunez?
And is it thus a faithful wife you treat?
I wonder in what quarter now the moon is:
I praise your vast forbearance not to beat
Me also, since the time so opportune is—
Oh, valiant man! with sword drawn and cock'd trigger,
Now, tell me, don't you cut a pretty figure?

the moon ✧ Julia implies that Alfonso is crazed by the influence of the moon: a "lunatic".

CLI

"Was it for this you took your sudden journey.
Under pretence of business indispensable
With that sublime of rascals your attorney,
Whom I see standing there, and looking sensible
Of having play'd the fool? though both I spurn, he
Deserves the worst, his conduct's less defensible,
Because, no doubt, 't was for his dirty fee,
And not from any love to you nor me.

that sublime of rascals ✧ Byron, like Dr Johnson, had little good to say of attorneys, with more reason. A "sublime" is an epitome — an ultimate refinement (a nadir, in this case) — that implies, too, haughtiness and superiority or, perhaps, only "raised up".

CLII

“If he comes here to take a deposition,
By all means let the gentleman proceed;
You’ve made the apartment in a fit condition:
There’s pen and ink for you, sir, when you need—
Let every thing be noted with precision,
I would not you for nothing should be fee’d—
But, as my maid’s undrest, pray turn your spies out."
“Oh!" sobb’d Antonia, “I could tear their eyes out."

CLIII

“There is the closet, there the toilet, there
The antechamber—search them under, over;
There is the sofa, there the great arm-chair,
The chimney—which would really hold a lover.
I wish to sleep, and beg you will take care
And make no further noise, till you discover
The secret cavern of this lurking treasure—
And when ’t is found, let me, too, have that pleasure.

CLIV

“And now, Hidalgo! now that you have thrown
Doubt upon me, confusion over all,
Pray have the courtesy to make it known
“Who” is the man you search for? how d’ ye call
Him? what’s his lineage? let him but be shown—
I hope he’s young and handsome—is he tall?
Tell me—and be assured, that since you stain
My honour thus, it shall not be in vain.

Hidalgo ✧ A Spaniard of unalloyed blood. See the earlier description of Don José

CLV

“At least, perhaps, he has not sixty years,
At that age he would be too old for slaughter,
Or for so young a husband’s jealous fears
(Antonia! let me have a glass of water).
I am ashamed of having shed these tears,
They are unworthy of my father’s daughter;
My mother dream’d not in my natal hour
That I should fall into a monster’s power.

CLVI

"Perhaps 't is of Antonia you are jealous,
You saw that she was sleeping by my side
When you broke in upon us with your fellows:
Look where you please—we've nothing, sir, to hide;
Only another time, I trust, you'll tell us,
Or for the sake of decency abide
A moment at the door, that we may be
Drest to receive so much good company.

CLVII

"And now, sir, I have done, and say no more;
The little I have said may serve to show
The guileless heart in silence may grieve o'er
The wrongs to whose exposure it is slow:
I leave you to your conscience as before,
'T will one day ask you "why" you used me so?
God grant you feel not then the bitterest grief!—
Antonia! where's my pocket-handkerchief?"

CLVIII

She ceased, and turn'd upon her pillow; pale
She lay, her dark eyes flashing through their tears,
Like skies that rain and lighten; as a veil,
Waved and o'ershading her wan cheek, appears
Her streaming hair; the black curls strive, but fail,
To hide the glossy shoulder, which uprears
Its snow through all;—her soft lips lie apart,
And louder than her breathing beats her heart.

CLIX

The Senhor Don Alfonso stood confused;
Antonia bustled round the ransack'd room,
And, turning up her nose, with looks abused
Her master and his myrmidons, of whom
Not one, except the attorney, was amused;
He, like Achates, faithful to the tomb,
So there were quarrels, cared not for the cause,
Knowing they must be settled by the laws.

She ceased. . . ✧ A verse of "elevated" poetic diction and classical tropes makes a perfect comic complement to Julia's theatrical speech of hypocritical outrage.

myrmidons ✧ The bodyguards of Achilles in the *Iliad*.

Achates ✧ Aeneas's faithful companion in Virgil's epic poem. A second reminder that ***Don⚔Juan***, too, is an epic.

CLX

With prying snub-nose, and small eyes, he stood,
Following Antonia's motions here and there,
With much suspicion in his attitude;
For reputations he had little care;
So that a suit or action were made good,
Small pity had he for the young and fair,
And ne'er believed in negatives, till these
Were proved by competent false witnesses.

CLXI

But Don Alfonso stood with downcast looks,
And, truth to say, he made a foolish figure;
When, after searching in five hundred nooks,
And treating a young wife with so much rigour,
He gain'd no point, except some self-rebukes,
Added to those his lady with such vigour
Had pour'd upon him for the last half-hour,
Quick, thick, and heavy—as a thunder-shower.

CLXII

At first he tried to hammer an excuse,
To which the sole reply was tears and sobs,
And indications of hysterics, whose
Prologue is always certain throes, and throbs,
Gasps, and whatever else the owners choose:
Alfonso saw his wife, and thought of Job's;
He saw too, in perspective, her relations,
And then he tried to muster all his patience.

Job's wife ✧ She advised the biblical Patriarch, tested by God with misfortune and disease, to "Curse God and die". Her character is that of a spiteful wife who torments rather than consoles. Perhaps Alfonso is also measuring his own patience against the stoicism of Job.

CLXIII

He stood in act to speak, or rather stammer,
But sage Antonia cut him short before
The anvil of his speech received the hammer,
With "Pray, sir, leave the room, and say no more,
Or madam dies."—Alfonso mutter'd, "D—n her,"
But nothing else, the time of words was o'er;
He cast a rueful look or two, and did,
He knew not wherefore, that which he was bid.

CLXIV

With him retired his "*posse comitatus*,"
The attorney last, who linger'd near the door
Reluctantly, still tarrying there as late as
Antonia let him—not a little sore
At this most strange and unexplain'd "hiatus"
In Don Alfonso's facts, which just now wore
An awkward look; as he revolved the case,
The door was fasten'd in his legal face.

posse comitatus ✧ The "power of the county", that is, an armed force raised by the sheriff to enforce the law.

CLXV

No sooner was it bolted, than—Oh shame!
Oh sin! Oh sorrow! and oh womankind!
How can you do such things and keep your fame,
Unless this world, and t' other too, be blind?
Nothing so dear as an unfilch'd good name!
But to proceed—for there is more behind:
With much heartfelt reluctance be it said,
Young Juan slipp'd half-smother'd, from the bed.

an unfilch'd good name ✧ Iago in *Othello* (III, iii 155): "...He that filches from me my good name / Robs me of that which not enriches him / And makes me poor indeed"

CLXVI

He had been hid—I don't pretend to say
How, nor can I indeed describe the where—
Young, slender, and pack'd easily, he lay,
No doubt, in little compass, round or square;
But pity him I neither must nor may
His suffocation by that pretty pair;
'T were better, sure, to die so, than be shut
With maudlin Clarence in his Malmsey butt.

to die so ✧ To "die" was a common poetic euphemism for detumescence in the 16th and 17th centuries. The OED cites Shakespeare and Donne but also John Denver's *Annie's Song ("You fill up my senses")*. Byron repeats the innuendo two verses later at verse 168 (in case we missed it?).

maudlin Clarence ✧ In Shakespeare's *Richard III* (I, iv) the Duke of Clarence is drowned in a butt of wine after having been stabbed. Malmsey was a sweet wine, like a sherry.

CLXVII

And, secondly, I pity not, because
He had no business to commit a sin,
Forbid by heavenly, fined by human laws,
At least 't was rather early to begin;
But at sixteen the conscience rarely gnaws
So much as when we call our old debts in
At sixty years, and draw the accompts of evil,
And find a deuced balance with the devil.

fined by human laws ✧ See *mulct*

CLXVIII

Of his position I can give no notion:
'T is written in the Hebrew Chronicle,
How the physicians, leaving pill and potion,
Prescribed, by way of blister, a young belle,
When old King David's blood grew dull in motion,
And that the medicine answer'd very well;
Perhaps 't was in a different way applied,
For David lived, but Juan nearly died.

CLXIX

What's to be done? Alfonso will be back
The moment he has sent his fools away.
Antonia's skill was put upon the rack,
But no device could be brought into play—
And how to parry the renew'd attack?
Besides, it wanted but few hours of day:
Antonia puzzled; Julia did not speak,
But press'd her bloodless lip to Juan's cheek.

CLXX

He turn'd his lip to hers, and with his hand
Call'd back the tangles of her wandering hair;
Even then their love they could not all command,
And half forgot their danger and despair:
Antonia's patience now was at a stand—
"Come, come, 't is no time now for fooling there,"
She whisper'd, in great wrath—"I must deposit
This pretty gentleman within the closet:

CLXXI

"Pray, keep your nonsense for some luckier night—
"Who" can have put my master in this mood?
What will become on 't—I'm in such a fright,
The devil's in the urchin, and no good—
Is this a time for giggling? this a plight?
Why, don't you know that it may end in blood?
You'll lose your life, and I shall lose my place,
My mistress all, for that half-girlish face.

the Hebrew Chronicle ✧ This is I Kings, i, where Abishag the Shunammite, a "*damsel very fair*", is recruited to warm the bed & bones of the ageing King David. In fact, the *medicine* did not work so well in David's case, because he dies in the following chapter.

that half-girlish face ✒ The much-imitated portrait by Thomas Phillips (1813) now at Newstead.

CLXXII

“Had it but been for a stout cavalier
Of twenty-five or thirty (come, make haste)—
But for a child, what piece of work is here!
I really, madam, wonder at your taste
(Come, sir, get in)—my master must be near:
There, for the present, at the least, he’s fast,
And if we can but till the morning keep
Our counsel—(Juan, mind, you must not sleep)."

CLXXIII

Now, Don Alfonso entering, but alone,
Closed the oration of the trusty maid:
She loiter’d, and he told her to be gone,
An order somewhat sullenly obey’d;
However, present remedy was none,
And no great good seem’d answer’d if she stay’d:
Regarding both with slow and sidelong view,
She snuff’d the candle, curtsied, and withdrew.

CLXXIV

Alfonso paused a minute—then begun
Some strange excuses for his late proceeding;
He would not justify what he had done,
To say the best, it was extreme ill-breeding;
But there were ample reasons for it, none
Of which he specified in this his pleading:
His speech was a fine sample, on the whole,
Of rhetoric, which the learn’d call “rigmarole".

CLXXV

Julia said nought; though all the while there rose
A ready answer, which at once enables
A matron, who her husband’s foible knows,
By a few timely words to turn the tables,
Which, if it does not silence, still must pose,—
Even if it should comprise a pack of fables;
’T is to retort with firmness, and when he
Suspects with “one”, do you reproach with “three”.

CLXXVI

Julia, in fact, had tolerable grounds,—
    Alfonso's loves with Inez were well known,
But whether 't was that one's own guilt confounds—
    But that can't be, as has been often shown,
A lady with apologies abounds;—
    It might be that her silence sprang alone
From delicacy to Don Juan's ear,
To whom she knew his mother's fame was dear.

tolerable grounds ✧ Ironic that, having made such bitter fun of attorneys, B. begins to use their language when he wants to be *forensic*. See *"one more motive"* in the next Stanza, too.

CLXXVII

There might be one more motive, which makes two;
    Alfonso ne'er to Juan had alluded,—
Mention'd his jealousy but never who
    Had been the happy lover, he concluded,
Conceal'd amongst his premises; 't is true,
    His mind the more o'er this its mystery brooded;
To speak of Inez now were, one may say,
Like throwing Juan in Alfonso's way.

CLXXVIII

A hint, in tender cases, is enough;
    Silence is best, besides there is a "tact"—
(That modern phrase appears to me sad stuff,
    But it will serve to keep my verse compact)—
Which keeps, when push'd by questions rather rough,
    A lady always distant from the fact:
The charming creatures lie with such a grace,
There's nothing so becoming to the face.

That modern phrase ✧ The OED says the word "tact" meaning skill in dealing with delicate situations was an import into the English language from the French (where it referred to a sense of touch) around the start of the 19th Century.

CLXXIX

They blush, and we believe them; at least I
    Have always done so; 't is of no great use,
In any case, attempting a reply,
    For then their eloquence grows quite profuse;
And when at length they 're out of breath, they sigh,
    And cast their languid eyes down, and let loose
A tear or two, and then we make it up;
And then—and then—and then—sit down and sup.

CLXXX

Alfonso closed his speech, and begg'd her pardon,
Which Julia half withheld, and then half granted,
And laid conditions he thought very hard on,
Denying several little things he wanted:
He stood like Adam lingering near his garden,
With useless penitence perplex'd and haunted,
Beseeching she no further would refuse,
When, lo! he stumbled o'er a pair of shoes.

CLXXXI

A pair of shoes!—what then? not much, if they
Are such as fit with ladies' feet, but these
(No one can tell how much I grieve to say)
Were masculine; to see them, and to seize,
Was but a moment's act.—Ah! well-a-day!
My teeth begin to chatter, my veins freeze—
Alfonso first examined well their fashion,
And then flew out into another passion.

CLXXXII

He left the room for his relinquish'd sword,
And Julia instant to the closet flew.
"Fly, Juan, fly! for heaven's sake—not a word—
The door is open—you may yet slip through
The passage you so often have explored—
Here is the garden-key—Fly—fly—Adieu!
Haste—haste! I hear Alfonso's hurrying feet—
Day has not broke—there's no one in the street:"

CLXXXIII

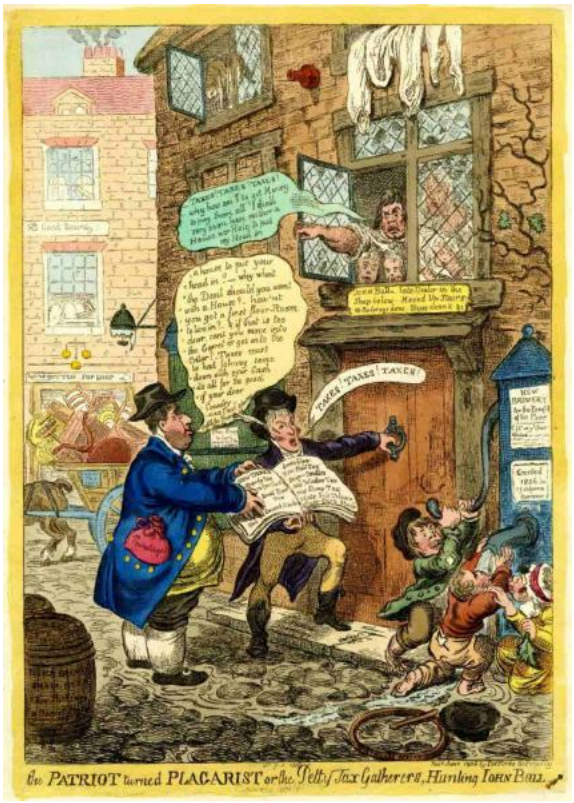
None can say that this was not good advice,
The only mischief was, it came too late;
Of all experience 't is the usual price,
A sort of income-tax laid on by fate:
Juan had reach'd the room-door in a trice,
And might have done so by the garden-gate,
But met Alfonso in his dressing-gown,
Who threaten'd death—so Juan knock'd him down.

like Adam lingering near his garden ✧ In the closing scenes of Book XII of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve, expelled from the Garden by the Archangel Michael, linger a moment outside the Eastern gates. Alfonso, like Adam no doubt, now contemplates "uselessly" his own responsibility for the fiasco. Until, that is …

shoes ✧ Once again Byron skilfully delays the "reveal" until the last word of the stanza.

My teeth begin to chatter ✧ We're in full melodrama mode now! "*Well-a-day*"!

The passage ✧ A *double entendre*



income-tax ✧ In 1799 the government of William Pitt levied the first modern tax on incomes (1 or 10 percent) to support rearmament against potential threats from Napoleon. James Gillray's 1806 cartoon shows the householder unsuccessfully trying to hide from the tax-collectors. The brats at lower-right are drinking from a pump described as "A new brewery for the benefit of the poor …"

CLXXXIV

Dire was the scuffle, and out went the light;
Antonia cried out “Rape!" and Julia “Fire!"
But not a servant stirr’d to aid the fight.
Alfonso, pommell’d to his heart’s desire,
Swore lustily he’d be revenged this night;
And Juan, too, blasphemed an octave higher;
His blood was up: though young, he was a Tartar,
And not at all disposed to prove a martyr.

pommell’d to his heart’s desire ✧ The cuckhold as massochist

a Tartar, ✧ Europeans and Russians called the Mongol invaders of the second half of the13th century “Tartars”, although the Tatars were in fact a central Asian turkic-speaking people driven westward by the ferocious sweep of Genghis (and Batu) Khan’s armies.

CLXXXV

Alfonso’s sword had dropp’d ere he could draw it,
And they continued battling hand to hand,
For Juan very luckily ne’er saw it;
His temper not being under great command,
If at that moment he had chanced to claw it,
Alfonso’s days had not been in the land
Much longer.—Think of husbands’, lovers’ lives!
And how ye may be doubly widows—wives!

CLXXXVI

Alfonso grappled to detain the foe,
And Juan throttled him to get away,
And blood (’t was from the nose) began to flow;
At last, as they more faintly wrestling lay,
Juan contrived to give an awkward blow,
And then his only garment quite gave way;
He fled, like Joseph, leaving it; but there,
I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair.

like Joseph ✒ Genesis 39:12 tells the story of Joseph’s servitude in the house of the Egyptian Captain Potiphar, whose wife tried to seduce the handsome boy. When he refused she grabbed his clothing, but Joseph shed his robe and fled, naked. Potiphar’s wife then cried out for help saying that he had tried to rape her, holding out his garment as proof. Of course, Byron has reversed the story. The painting is by Guido Reni, 1630

CLXXXVII

Lights came at length, and men, and maids, who found
An awkward spectacle their eyes before;
Antonia in hysterics, Julia swoon’d,
Alfonso leaning, breathless, by the door;
Some half-torn drapery scatter’d on the ground,
Some blood, and several footsteps, but no more:
Juan the gate gain’d, turn’d the key about,
And liking not the inside, lock’d the out.

CLXXXVIII

Here ends this canto.—Need I sing, or say,
How Juan naked, favour'd by the night,
Who favours what she should not, found his way,
And reach'd his home in an unseemly plight?
The pleasant scandal which arose next day,
The nine days' wonder which was brought to light,
And how Alfonso sued for a divorce,
Were in the English newspapers, of course.

CLXXXIX

If you would like to see the whole proceedings,
The depositions, and the cause at full,
The names of all the witnesses, the pleadings
Of counsel to nonsuit, or to annul,
There's more than one edition, and the readings
Are various, but they none of them are dull;
The best is that in short-hand ta'en by Gurney,
Who to Madrid on purpose made a journey.

CXC

But Donna Inez, to divert the train
Of one of the most circulating scandals
That had for centuries been known in Spain,
At least since the retirement of the Vandals,
First vow'd (and never had she vow'd in vain)
To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles;
And then, by the advice of some old ladies,
She sent her son to be shipp'd off from Cadiz.

CXCI

She had resolved that he should travel through
All European climes, by land or sea,
To mend his former morals, and get new,
Especially in France and Italy
(At least this is the thing most people do).
Julia was sent into a convent: she
Grieved, but, perhaps, her feelings may be better
Shown in the following copy of her Letter:—

the English newspapers ✧ ***PC*** notes that Byron often directed his satire at the English press that had treated him unfairly during his separation, using them as "emblem's of the age's inadequate self-image." The "*of course*" here reflects Byron's scorn of the scandalmongering in his case.

nonsuit ✧ A finding against the plaintiff who fails to provide sufficient evidence to found his claims in a civil suit.

Gurney ✧ William Brodie Gurney was the official Parliamentary shorthand writer who also reported testimony in trials for the press. There is no record of his ever visiting Spain.

Vandals ✧ A Germanic tribe that the Huns and Goths in the 5th century pushed south from their homelands, first into northern Spain and eventually, under their King Genseric, into north Africa. There, they established a successful kingdom based at Carthage, absorbing Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica and finally sacking Rome in 455. Later writers described their conquest as barbaric ("vandalism") but modern scholars consider them important preservers and transmitters of Roman culture. Note that line 1516 of the poem in Byron's manuscript reads: "*Since Roderic's Goths, or older Genseric's Vandals,*"

shipp'd off from Cadiz ✧ Launching Juan on his epic adventure …

CXCII

"They tell me 't is decided; you depart:
'T is wise—'t is well, but not the less a pain;
I have no further claim on your young heart,
Mine is the victim, and would be again;
To love too much has been the only art
I used;—I write in haste, and if a stain
Be on this sheet, 't is not what it appears;
My eyeballs burn and throb, but have no tears.

CXCIII

"I loved, I love you, for this love have lost
State, station, heaven, mankind's, my own esteem,
And yet can not regret what it hath cost,
So dear is still the memory of that dream;
Yet, if I name my guilt, 't is not to boast,
None can deem harshlier of me than I deem:
I trace this scrawl because I cannot rest—
I've nothing to reproach, or to request.

CXCIV

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'T is woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone.

Man's love . . . whole existence ✧ Among the most quoted phrases in the entire epic. But how few who know it know that Byron wrote it, or where to find it in his works?

CXCV

"You will proceed in pleasure, and in pride,
Beloved and loving many; all is o'er
For me on earth, except some years to hide
My shame and sorrow deep in my heart's core;
These I could bear, but cannot cast aside
The passion which still rages as before—
And so farewell—forgive me, love me—No,
That word is idle now—but let it go.

CXCVI

“My breast has been all weakness, is so yet;
But still I think I can collect my mind;
My blood still rushes where my spirit’s set,
As roll the waves before the settled wind;
My heart is feminine, nor can forget—
To all, except one image, madly blind;
So shakes the needle, and so stands the pole,
As vibrates my fond heart to my fix’d soul.

CXCVII

“I have no more to say, but linger still,
And dare not set my seal upon this sheet,
And yet I may as well the task fulfil,
My misery can scarce be more complete:
I had not lived till now, could sorrow kill;
Death shuns the wretch who fain the blow would meet,
And I must even survive this last adieu,
And bear with life, to love and pray for you!"

CXCVIII

This note was written upon gilt-edged paper
With a neat little crow-quill, slight and new:
Her small white hand could hardly reach the taper,
It trembled as magnetic needles do,
And yet she did not let one tear escape her;
The seal a sun-flower; “”Elle vous suit partout”,"
The motto cut upon a white cornelian;
The wax was superfine, its hue vermilion.

Elle vous suit partout ✧ “She follows you everywhere.” Alas, Juan’s passion for Julia is much briefer; erased in the next Canto by sea-sickness.

CXCIX

This was Don Juan’s earliest scrape; but whether
I shall proceed with his adventures is
Dependent on the public altogether;
We’ll see, however, what they say to this:
Their favour in an author’s cap’s a feather,
And no great mischief’s done by their caprice;
And if their approbation we experience,
Perhaps they’ll have some more about a year hence.

CC

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
    Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
    A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
New characters; the episodes are three:
    A panoramic view of hell's in training,
After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
So that my name of Epic's no misnomer.

A list of ships, and captains, and kings ✧ The classical epics, especially the *Iliad* of Homer and Virgil's *Æneid* do contain lists of heroes and leaders as a sort of war memorial.

A panoramic view of hell ✧ Both the *Odyssey* of Homer and the *Æneid* include scenes in which the Hero descends to Hades to visit comrades who died in battle or who lie unburied. Of course, the original Don Juan went to hell; and stayed there. Perhaps at this early stage of his "unplanned" epic, Byron thought of sending Juan, too. Thomas Medwin in his unreliable report of Byron's conversations says Byron told friends that Juan might end on the scaffold: guillotined in the French Revolution. But if he planned a visit to Hell, Byron did not live long enough to compose the verse.

CCI

All these things will be specified in time,
    With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,
The "Vade Mecum" of the true sublime,
    Which makes so many poets, and some fools:
Prose poets like blank-verse, I'm fond of rhyme,
    Good workmen never quarrel with their tools;
I've got new mythological machinery,
And very handsome supernatural scenery.

Aristotle . . . sublime ✧ A vade mecum (Latin for "go with me") was a pocket-book of useful information. Aristotle's Poetics might be read as an "instruction manual" for poets and dramatists.

machinery . . . scenery ✧ Theatrical references.

CCII

There's only one slight difference between
    Me and my epic brethren gone before,
And here the advantage is my own, I ween
    (Not that I have not several merits more,
But this will more peculiarly be seen);
    They so embellish, that 't is quite a bore
Their labyrinth of fables to thread through,
Whereas this story's actually true.

labyrinth of fables ✧ Probably a reference to Southey's oriental epics *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama*, both of which have obscure, tangled plots based on sorcery and demonism. Contemporary critics were unimpressed; the poems today are forgotten.

CCIII

If any person doubt it, I appeal
    To history, tradition, and to facts,
To newspapers, whose truth all know and feel,
    To plays in five, and operas in three acts;
All these confirm my statement a good deal,
    But that which more completely faith exacts
Is that myself, and several now in Seville,
"Saw" Juan's last elopement with the devil.

newspapers, whose truth all know and feel ✧ 'Fake news' is not a recent phenomenon. Newspapers in the early 19th century, too, tended to confirm their readers' biasses and to have as firm a hold on 'truth' as theatre or Opera: whose libretti have a notoriously loose grasp on reality.

myself, and several now in Seville ✧ The narrator from the early part of the Canto now seems to reappear briefly to offer a completely misleading testimony.

CCIV

If ever I should condescend to prose,
I'll write poetical commandments, which
Shall supersede beyond all doubt all those
That went before; in these I shall enrich
My text with many things that no one knows,
And carry precept to the highest pitch:
I'll call the work "Longinus o'er a Bottle,
Or, Every Poet his "own" Aristotle."

CCV

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy:
With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy:
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor
Commit—flirtation with the muse of Moore.

CCVI

Thou shalt not covet Mr. Sotheby's Muse,
His Pegasus, nor anything that's his;
Thou shalt not bear false witness like "the Blues"
(There's "one", at least, is very fond of this);
Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose:
This is true criticism, and you may kiss—
Exactly as you please, or not,—the rod;
But if you don't, I'll lay it on, by G-d!

CCVII

If any person should presume to assert
This story is not moral, first, I pray,
That they will not cry out before they're hurt,
Then that they'll read it o'er again, and say
(But, doubtless, nobody will be so pert)
That this is not a moral tale, though gay;
Besides, in Canto Twelfth, I mean to show
The very place where wicked people go.

poetical commandments ✧ This "blasphemous" line and the jokey echo of the Ten Commandments in the next two verses caused a furore among some stuffier contemporary critics that is hard to understand today. Byron even feared, at one point, that publication under his own name might lead to his conviction for blasphemy which would endanger his guardianship of his daughter Ada.

Longinus ✧ We've encountered the author of *The Sublime* before.

Milton, Dryden, Pope ✧ Byron's Trinity of English verse; the last the greatest. Pope was, possibly, the only satirist in English who surpassed Byron for fierce wit.

Southey ✧ B.'s rhyme of the Poet Laureate's name with "mouthy", two lines later, adds the injury of mispronunciation to this insult of his poetic nemesis. I'm ashamed to say, I missed the trick in the recording accompanying this text.

The second drunk ✧ This is lit. crit. as a blood-sport. Coleridge alone replied to these slanders with a deft wit that Byron must have appreciated: *"My Lord,/ That I should be selected by you to share such immortality as Time may confer upon your Don Juan demands my acknowledgement, the quality of which is enlarged by the charge of inebriety that you prefer against me. Had you adorned me with indolence and irresolution the commendation had been just, but the more elegant acquirement of intemperance it were flattery to attribute to me. This example of your Lordship's taste and knowledge would embolden me to esteem you as among the first of our great writers if you would condescend first to avoid a too servile flattery of your contemporaries, and next to obtain correct information on the habits of those you celebrate. The sobriety of this letter is the unhappy proof of the extravagance of your praise. I am / your Lordship's obedient sober servant, / S.T.Coleridge."* (Quoted by ***PC***)

Hippocrene ✧ A stream on Mount Helicon that was supposed to be a source of poetic inspiration.

Mr. Sotheby ✧ A minor poet whom Byron disliked, believing he had written an anonymous critical review of Byron's poem *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

Pegasus ✧ A winged horse that sprang from the spilled blood of the Gorgon Medusa when Perseus beheaded her. Used by writers since the Renaissance as an icon of poetic inspiration.

the Blues ✧ Bluestockings, according to ***PC*** . The "one" is probably Lady Byron.

in Canto Twelfth ✧ An unreliable promise, naturally. By Canto XII, Byron is not even hinting at the close of the Epic or a descent into Hell. Juan finds himself, instead, introduced to London and St. James Palace.

CCVIII

If, after all, there should be some so blind
To their own good this warning to despise,
Led by some tortuosity of mind,
Not to believe my verse and their own eyes,
And cry that they “the moral cannot find,"
I tell him, if a clergyman, he lies;
Should captains the remark, or critics, make,
They also lie too—under a mistake.

CCIX

The public approbation I expect,
And beg they’ll take my word about the moral,
Which I with their amusement will connect
(So children cutting teeth receive a coral);
Meantime, they’ll doubtless please to recollect
My epical pretensions to the laurel:
For fear some prudish readers should grow skittish,
I’ve bribed *my grandmother’s review*—the British.

my grandmother’s review ✧ The Editor of the British Review was incautious enough to deny receiving any such bribe.

CCX

I sent it in a letter to the Editor,
Who thank’d me duly by return of post—
I’m for a handsome article his creditor;
Yet, if my gentle Muse he please to roast,
And break a promise after having made it her,
Denying the receipt of what it cost,
And smear his page with gall instead of honey,
All I can say is—that he had the money.

CCXI

I think that with this *holy new alliance*
I may ensure the public, and defy
All other magazines of art or science,
Daily, or monthly, or three monthly; I
Have not essay’d to multiply their clients,
Because they tell me ’t were in vain to try,
And that the Edinburgh Review and Quarterly
Treat a dissenting author very martyrly.

this holy new alliance ✧ The “Holy Alliance” (pun on “*wholly*”) was an alliance of Russia, Prussia and Austria — three reactionary, autocratic, states — formed at the instigation of Tsar Alexander I (whom Byron attacks later in the poem).

the Edinburgh Review and Quarterly ✧ The Edinburgh Review, that demonstrated its political allegiance to the Whig party by its buff-and-blue covers, had “martyred” Byron’s first published book of poems (*Hours of Idleness*) in 1807. He took revenge in 1809 with a brilliant, fiery broadside (*English Bards and Scots Reviewers*) that first brought him to wide public attention as a satirist. In the same year Byron’s publisher John Murray set up a rival Tory-leaning review, the Quarterly. Both magazines were inclined to skewer authors they did not approve.

CCXII

"Non ego hoc ferrem calida juventâ
Consule Planco", Horace said, and so
Say I; by which quotation there is meant a
Hint that some six or seven good years ago
(Long ere I dreamt of dating from the Brenta)
I was most ready to return a blow,
And would not brook at all this sort of thing
In my hot youth—when George the Third was King.

CCXIII

But now at thirty years my hair is grey
(I wonder what it will be like at forty?
I thought of a peruke the other day)—
My heart is not much greener; and, in short, I
Have squander'd my whole summer while 't was May,
And feel no more the spirit to retort; I
Have spent my life, both interest and principal,
And deem not, what I deem'd, my soul invincible.

CCXIV

No more—no more—Oh! never more on me
The freshness of the heart can fall like dew,
Which out of all the lovely things we see
Extracts emotions beautiful and new,
Hived in our bosoms like the bag o' the bee:
Think'st thou the honey with those objects grew?
Alas! 't was not in them, but in thy power
To double even the sweetness of a flower.

CCXV

No more—no more—Oh! never more, my heart,
Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!
Once all in all, but now a thing apart,
Thou canst not be my blessing or my curse:
The illusion's gone for ever, and thou art
Insensible, I trust, but none the worse,
And in thy stead I've got a deal of judgment,
Though heaven knows how it ever found a lodgment.

'Non ego hoc ferrem . . . ✧ "I should not have borne such things in the heat of my youth when Plancus was Consul". Horace — a Byron favorite — referred to the Consul of 42 BCE when he was twenty-three. He claims to have grown mellow with age, but he lived only to the age of 56.

the Brenta ✧ Byron rented a villa at La Mira on the River Brenta when he arrived in Venice in 1817.

In my hot youth ✧ Byron wittily recapitulates the verse from Horace. George III was still King as he wrote this, but had been sequestered for several years as mentally unstable.

at forty ✧ Byron was never to know. He died when he was not yet thirty-seven.

CCXVI

My days of love are over; me no more
The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,
Can make the fool of which they made before,—
In short, I must not lead the life I did do;
The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
The copious use of claret is forbid too,
So for a good old-gentlemanly vice,
I think I must take up with avarice.

CCXVII

Ambition was my idol, which was broken
Before the shrines of Sorrow, and of Pleasure;
And the two last have left me many a token
O'er which reflection may be made at leisure:
Now, like Friar Bacon's brazen head, I've spoken,
"Time is, Time was, Time's past:"—a chymic treasure
Is glittering youth, which I have spent betimes—
My heart in passion, and my head on rhymes.

CCXVIII

What is the end of Fame? 't is but to fill
A certain portion of uncertain paper:
Some liken it to climbing up a hill,
Whose summit, like all hills, is lost in vapour;
For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,
And bards burn what they call their "midnight taper,"
To have, when the original is dust,
A name, a wretched picture, and worse bust.

CCXIX

What are the hopes of man? Old Egypt's King
Cheops erected the first pyramid
And largest, thinking it was just the thing
To keep his memory whole, and mummy hid;
But somebody or other rummaging,
Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops.

My days of love are over ✧ Byron completed the first draft of Canto I of ***Don Juan*** in September 1818 at the Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice after spending the spring and summer of that year indulging himself in energetic sexual adventures with a variety of lovers from Carnival society and the *demi-monde* (and contracting the clap for his troubles). It's quite possible this stanza expresses real exhaustion. But it is also an imitation of one verse of the first ode of Book 4 of Horace's Odes in which the poet, unusually, invokes the goddess Venus asking her to leave him in peace because, now, neither women nor boys, nor the hope for love returned, nor drinking companions, nor temples decked with floral wreathes hold any interest for him …

many a token ✧ Including the STD he picked up in Venice

Friar Bacon's brazen head ✧ A reference to Robert Greene's historical comedy "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" (1594). Greene portrays the 13th-century philosopher and experimental naturalist, Roger Bacon, as an alchemist and magician who creates a brazen head for the purposes of his spells. While he sleeps the head speaks (*"Time is, Time was …"*) to Bacon's servant but then falls to the floor and shatters.

chymic ✧ Here, meaning "alchemical"

worse bust ✒ Byron disliked the marble bust — commissioned by Hobhouse — that the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen made of him in 1817. According to Thorvaldsen, Byron said his own expression was "more unhappy". He later wrote in his Journal that a bust, unlike a painted portrait, "smacks of something of a hankering for public fame rather than private remembrance." It is, in fact, one of his finest portraits.

CCXX

But I being fond of true philosophy,
Say very often to myself, "Alas!
All things that have been born were born to die,
And flesh (which Death mows down to hay) is grass;
You've pass'd your youth not so unpleasantly,
And if you had it o'er again—'t would pass—
So thank your stars that matters are no worse,
And read your Bible, sir, and mind your purse."

CCXXI

But for the present, gentle reader! and
Still gentler purchaser! the bard—that's I—
Must, with permission, shake you by the hand,
And so "Your humble servant, and good-b'ye!"
We meet again, if we should understand
Each other; and if not, I shall not try
Your patience further than by this short sample—
'T were well if others follow'd my example.

CCXXII

"Go, little book, from this my solitude!
I cast thee on the waters—go thy ways!
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
The world will find thee after many days."
When Southey's read, and Wordsworth understood,
I can't help putting in my claim to praise—
The four first rhymes are Southey's every line:
For God's sake, reader! take them not for mine.

Cheops Byron may have seen a report in the Quarterly Review of April 1817 on the discovery of the "subterranean" chamber in the Pyramid of Cheops (Khufu) by the Italian Egyptologist Giovanni Caviglia. Cheops' burial chamber in the Great Pyramid — containing his broken, unfinished, empty sarcophagus — was re-discovered, first, by the Arab caliph Al-Mamun in about 820 CE. If *ever* it contained the King's mummy and funerary goods, they had been looted in antiquity. The drawing is by the Scots painter David Roberts R.A. (1839)

flesh . . . is grass ✧ Isaiah 40, 6-8: "*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth / Because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it / Surely the people is as grass / But the word of our Lord shall stand forever*".

Go, little book ✧ Byron quotes from the last verse of Southey's 1816 poem *The Lay of the Laureate, or Carmen Nuptiale* (Wedding Song) a piece of grovelling sycophancy celebrating the wedding of George IV's daughter Charlotte with Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg.

Canto II

The Raft of the Medusa: Canto II fulfils Byron's promise in Canto I to adopt (*sort of*) epic themes, including a storm, a shipwreck and a grisly tale of *survival at sea*. When the French naval frigate *Méduse* ran aground off the coast of Mauretania in 1816, there were boats for only half the 400 people on board. Only 15 of the 147 who had leaped on a hastily constructed raft were rescued. The decimation of the survivors was due to fighting, suicide, drowning and exposure. Only 4 days into their 13-day ordeal, the survivors – who had no food and little water – began to eat the dead. Théodore Géricault's moumental 1819 painting.

Some selections from Canto II

Juan departs Cadiz: the women of Cadiz praised; Inez dispatches Juan on a notional Grand Tour	*The great success of Juan's education / Spurred her to teach another generation.*	V–X
The ship Trinidada and the storm: Pedrillo sick in his hammock; the storm breaks; the ship broached, masts cut away, pumps failing	*Laid with one blast the ship on her beam ends.*	XXIV–XL
The longboat; Pedro and Tita lost; the spaniel rescued; the cutter swamped; thirty survivors in the longboat	*There's nought no doubt so much the spirit calms / As rum and true religion.*	LIV–LXIII
Juan swims ashore alone: glimpses Haidée's face; Byron's boast of swimming the Hellespont	*As once (a feat on which ourselves we prided) / Leander, Mr Ekenhead, and I did.*	CV–CXII
Lambro introduced; his house on one of the wilder Cyclades; Haidée his only daughter, greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles	*A little smuggling and some piracy / Left him at last the sole of many masters / Of an ill-gotten million of piastres.*	CXXIII–CXXX
Haidée's sleepless night and early rising; She returns to the cave; the angel-over-the-dying simile;	*And thus like to an angel o'er the dying / Who die in righteousness she leaned. . .*	CXXXVIII–CXLVIII
Diversion on wine; man being reasonable must get drunk; Byron loses his way and recovers it	*Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter, / Sermons and soda water the day after.*	CLXXVII–CLXXXI
The evening walk and the seduction: the sunset scene; the first kiss; the beach-side union	*Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed / By their own feelings hallowed and united. . .*	CLXXXII–CXCVII

I

Oh ye who teach the ingenuous youth of nations,
Holland, France, England, Germany, or Spain,
I pray ye flog them upon all occasions;
It mends their morals, never mind the pain.
The best of mothers and of educations
In Juan's case were but employed in vain,
Since in a way that's rather of the oddest, he
Became divested of his native modesty.

II

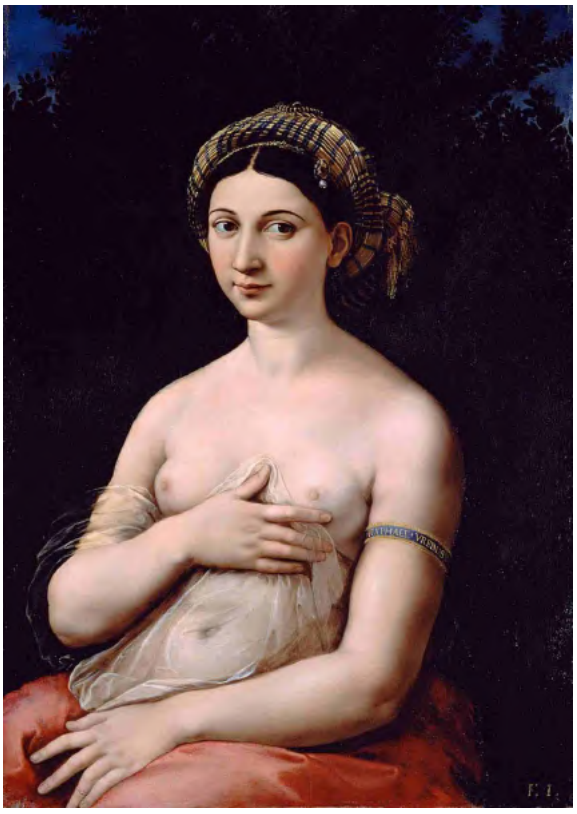
Had he but been placed at a public school,
In the third form or even in the fourth,
His daily task had kept his fancy cool -
At least had he been nurtured in the north.
Spain may prove an exception to the rule,
But then exceptions always prove its worth.
A lad of sixteen causing a divorce
Puzzled his tutors very much, of course.

III

I can't say that it puzzles me at all,
If all things be considered: first, there was
His lady mother, mathematical,
A—never mind; his tutor, an old ass;
A pretty woman (that's quite natural,
Or else the thing had hardly come to pass);
A husband rather old, not much in unity
With his young wife; a time and opportunity.

IV

Well—well, the world must turn upon its axis,
And all mankind turn with it, heads or tails,
And live and die, make love and pay our taxes,
And as the veering wind shifts, shift our sails.
The king commands us, and the doctor quacks us,
The priest instructs, and so our life exhales,
A little breath, love, wine, ambition, fame,
Fighting, devotion, dust—perhaps a name.



Dates Byron drafted Canto II at the Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice between December 13, 1818 and January 19, 1819. He had recently received payment for the sale of Newstead Abbey and had made arrangements with Hobhouse and his new business manager Douglas Kinnaird to pay the majority of his remaining English debts. He had also finally broken off with his fiery Venetian lover Maria Cogni (*La Fornarina* that is, the *the baker's wife*). Canto I of ***Don Juan*** was in the hands of Murray and, despite Hobhouse's insistence it was unpublishable, Byron enthusiastically spent the month before the start of the Venice *Carnivale* on the second Canto, launching Juan on his European adventures and his first great romance. Murray published Canto II along with Canto I on 15 July, 1819
The image is Raphael's portrait (about 1518) of his lover, Maguerita Luti, also known as "*La Fornarina*".

his native modesty ✧ That is, his virginity

a public school ✧ Byron was educated at Harrow, a "public school" where, despite such schools' reputation for brutality and his often pugnacious and disruptive behaviour, he had was treated with kindness and understanding by the Masters.

kept his fancy cool ✧ Byron's own fancies were warmed by his schooldays. It was at Harrow that he formed his first romantic male attachments — probably more than sentimental — that lasted well into his later life.

nurtured in the north ✧ See Canto I.LXIV where Byron insists that passions inflamed in southern climes by the warmth of the sun are cooled to indifference in the "moral North".

V

I said that Juan had been sent to Cadiz,
A pretty town, I recollect it well.
'Tis there the mart of the colonial trade is
(Or was, before Peru learned to rebel),
And such sweet girls—I mean, such graceful ladies.
Their very walk would make your bosom swell;
I can't describe it, though so much it strike,
Nor liken it—I never saw the like.

VI

An Arab horse, a stately stag, a barb
New broke, a cameleopard, a gazelle -
No, none of these will do. And then their garb,
Their veil and petticoat! Alas, to dwell
Upon such things would very near absorb
A canto. Then their feet and ankles—well,
Thank heaven I've got no metaphor quite ready
(And so, my sober Muse, come, let's be steady,

VII

Chaste Muse—well, if you must, you must)—the veil
Thrown back a moment with the glancing hand,
While the o'erpowering eye that turns you pale
Flashes into the heart. All sunny land
Of love, when I forget you, may I fail
To — say my prayers; but never was there planned
A dress through which the eyes give such a volley,
Excepting the Venetian fazzioli.

VIII

But to our tale. The Donna Inez sent
Her son to Cadiz only to embark;
To stay there had not answered her intent.
But why? We leave the reader in the dark.
'Twas for a voyage that the young man was meant,
As if a Spanish ship were Noah's ark,
To wean him from the wickedness of earth
And send him like a dove of promise forth.

HIS TUTOR ✧ In Canto I we learn that Juan's mother Inez hired "learnèd tutors" to teach expurgated classics to young Juan. Presumably Pedrillo was one of these.

QUACKS ✧ To treat in the manner of a quack; to administer quack medicines (OED)

CADIZ ✧ Byron visited the Spanish port city for a few days at the end of July 1809 with Hobhouse *en route* to the Eastern Mediterranean, during his youthful tour. It had become the port of entry for goods from Spain's declining empire — taking over from Seville — when sandbars made the river Guadalquivir impassible in the 18th century.

PERU ✧ Peru did not declare its independence with Spain until 1821, two years after this Canto was drafted, although Chile and Paraguay had already done so.

YOUR BOSOM ✧ Byron means another kind of tumescence...

BARB... CAMELEOPARD ✧ A horse from the Barbary Coast of Africa... a giraffe (*obsl.*)

SAY MY PRAYERS ✧ As ***PC*** notes, this travesties Psalm 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning."

FAZZIOLI ✧ A sort of veil (*lit.* "little kerchief") worn in Venice.

IN THE DARK ✧ Well... only readers who did not get Byron's hints in the previous three verses.

A DOVE OF PROMISE ✧ In *Geneis 7*, Noah sent a dove into the air to search for land amid the flood waters

IX

Don Juan bade his valet pack his things
According to direction, then received
A lecture and some money. For four springs
He was to travel, and though Inez grieved
(As every kind of parting has its stings),
She hoped he would improve, perhaps believed.
A letter too she gave (he never read it)
Of good advice—and two or three of credit.

X

In the meantime, to pass her hours away,
Brave Inez now set up a Sunday school
For naughty children, who would rather play
(Like truant rogues) the devil or the fool.
Infants of three years old were taught that day,
Dunces were whipt or set upon a stool.
The great success of Juan's education
Spurred her to teach another generation.

XI

Juan embarked, the ship got under way,
The wind was fair, the water passing rough.
A devil of a sea rolls in that bay,
As I, who've crossed it oft, know well enough.
And standing upon deck, the dashing spray
Flies in one's face and makes it weather-tough.
And there he stood to take and take again
His first, perhaps his last, farewell of Spain.

XII

I can't but say it is an awkward sight
To see one's native land receding through
The growing waters; it unmans one quite,
Especially when life is rather new.
I recollect Great Britain's coast looks white,
But almost every other country's blue,
When gazing on them, mystified by distance,
We enter on our nautical existence.

She hoped he would improve ✧ The notional purpose of the "Grand Tour" undertaken by wealthy young men in the 18th century was to complete their education by exposure to the great arts and historical sites of Europe. In reality, this was often an incidental benefit. The Tour allowed them to "sow their wild oats" abroad, conveniently out of sight and without consequences at home.

letters of credit ✧ Young noblemen on their Tour did not carry cash (too risky) but letters of credit that could be drawn down at foreign banks.

Dunces were whipt ✧ The original, improper and much funnier final couplet of this verse read

Their manners mending and their morals curing
She taught them to suppress their vice and urine.

The proof copy of Canto II shows the wounds of vigorous editing and erasures at this point: evidence of a dispute between B. and Hobouse. ***PC*** notes: "Hobhouse's comment may read in part '*Disgusting Gross indelicacy – staring out . . .*' Part of Byron's answer may be '*... read Swift if you want coarseness – and if you want real indelicacy read Moore – but don't attempt to saddle my "Scherzos" with that imputation.*'" B. scored through the offending couplet, however, replacing it with the version now included in most editions.

crossed it oft ✧ In fact, B. had crossed it only once in 1809. He is at pains, however, throughout this Canto to insist on his first-hand nautical knowledge; probably to lend credence to his exotic account of the storm and shipwreck.

our nautical existence ✧ B. hinting that he feels marooned in Italy? Juan may — for all B. knows at this point in his poem — have seen the last of Spain, just as *he* may have seen the last of Britain. Still, Byron is less at sea than he may fear. He began this Canto on the same night he fell in love with the Contessa Teresa Guiccioli. As he writes, his final, mature, romance is about to begin.

XIII

So Juan stood bewildered on the deck.
The wind sung, cordage strained, and sailors swore,
And the ship creaked, the town became a speck,
From which away so fair and fast they bore.
The best of remedies is a beefsteak
Against seasickness; try it, sir, before
You sneer, and I assure you this is true,
For I have found it answer—so may you.

XIV

Don Juan stood and gazing from the stern,
Beheld his native Spain receding far.
First partings form a lesson hard to learn;
Even nations feel this when they go to war.
There is a sort of unexprest concern,
A kind of shock that sets one's heart ajar.
At leaving even the most unpleasant people
And places, one keeps looking at the steeple.

XV

But Juan had got many things to leave,
His mother and a mistress and no wife,
So that he had much better cause to grieve
Than many persons more advanced in life.
And if we now and then a sigh must heave
At quitting even those we quit in strife,
No doubt we weep for those the heart endears,
That is, till deeper griefs congeal our tears.

XVI

So Juan wept, as wept the captive Jews
By Babel's waters, still remembering Sion.
I'd weep, but mine is not a weeping Muse,
And such light griefs are not a thing to die on.
Young men should travel, if but to amuse
Themselves; and the next time their servants tie on
Behind their carriages their new portmanteau,
Perhaps it may be lined with this my canto.

Bewildered on the deck ✒ The radical press mercilessly lampooned Byron's own flight from England on 25 April, 1816. In this contemporary broadsheet a slanderous Cruickshank cartoon, depicts Byron boarding the boat for Antwerp with three courtesans ("fake news!"). It is set above B.'s pathetic lyric *Fare Thee Well* that he wrote a couple of weeks earlier in an attempt to apologise, or explain his behaviour, to Annabelle. Just days later he signed the formal deed of separation. The letter to his wife, enclosing the poem, read:
"Dearest Bell — I send you the first verses that ever I attempted to write upon you, and perhaps the last that I may ever write at all. This at such a moment may look like affectation, but it is not so. The language of all nations nearest to a state of nature is said to be Poetry. I know not how this may be; but this I know. You know that the lover, the lunatic, and the poet are "of imagination all compact." I am afraid you have hitherto seen me only as the two first, but I would fain hope there is nothing in the last to add to grievances you may have against the former."

the captive Jews ✧ The second quote from Psalm 137 in this Canto: *"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."*

lined with this my canto ✧ A standard comic trope mocking literary fame: an author's books cut up and used for lining trunks and pie-tins.

XVII

And Juan wept and much he sighed and thought,
While his salt tears dropped into the salt sea.
'Sweets to the sweet' (I like so much to quote,
You must excuse this extract;'tis where she,
The Queen of Denmark, for Ophelia brought
Flowers to the grave). And sobbing often, he
Reflected on his present situation
And seriously resolved on reformation.

QUOTE ✧ From *Hamlet*, V.i. A nonsense quote, of course, given the previous line.

XVIII

'Farewell, my Spain, a long farewell!' he cried,
'Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
Of its own thirst to see again thy shore.
Farewell, where Guadalquivir's waters glide.
Farewell, my mother, and since all is o'er,
Farewell too, dearest Julia!' Here he drew
Her letter out again and read it through.

A LONG FAREWELL ✧ So begins one of Juan's longest speeches in the entire poem: poppycock from the poop deck, that B. counterpoints with bathetic detail.

XIX

'And oh, if e'er I should forget, I swear -
But that's impossible and cannot be.
Sooner shall this blue ocean melt to air,
Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea
Than I resign thine image, oh my fair!
Or think of anything excepting thee.
A mind diseased no remedy can physic.'
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew seasick.)

XX

'Sooner shall heaven kiss earth' (here he fell sicker) -
'Oh Julia, what is every other woe?
(For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor,
Pedro, Battista, help me down below.)
Julia, my love (you rascal, Pedro, quicker),
Oh Julia (this curst vessel pitches so),
Belovéd Julia, hear me still beseeching!'
(Here he grew inarticulate with retching.)

XXI

He felt that chilling heaviness of heart,
Or rather stomach, which alas, attends,
Beyond the best apothecary's art,
The loss of love, the treachery of friends,
Or death of those we dote on, when a part
Of us dies with them as each fond hope ends.
No doubt he would have been much more pathetic,
But the sea acted as a strong emetic.

XXII

Love's a capricious power. I've known it hold
Out through a fever caused by its own heat,
But be much puzzled by a cough and cold
And find a quinsy very hard to treat.
Against all noble maladies he's bold,
But vulgar illnesses don't like to meet,
Nor that a sneeze should interrupt his sigh,
Nor inflammations redden his blind eye.

A QUINSY ✧ An inflamation of the throat; tonsilitis.

XXIII

But worst of all is nausea or a pain
About the lower region of the bowels.
Love, who heroically breathes a vein,
Shrinks from the application of hot towels,
And purgatives are dangerous to his reign,
Seasickness death. His love was perfect; how else
Could Juan's passion, while the billows roar,
Resist his stomach, ne'er at sea before?

BREATHES A VEIN ✧ Not a medical treatment, but a lover's suicide.

` *The ship, called. . .*

Seasickness death ✒ B. could be very funny about *mal-de-mer*. On the point of boarding the Lisbon Packet at the start of his Grand Tour in 1809, he dashed off a brilliant verse on sea-sickness to Francis Hodgson, his Cambridge tutor, that was collected by Marchant with B.'s letters and journals. Here's an excerpt:

Fletcher, Murray, Bob, where are you?
Stretched along the deck like logs
Bear a hand—you jolly tar you!
Here's a rope's end for the dogs,
Hobhouse muttering fearful curses
As the hatchway down he rolls
Now his breakfast, now his verses
Vomits forth & damns our souls,
Here's a stanza
On Braganza
Help!—a couplet—no, a cup
Of warm water,
What's the matter?
Zounds! my liver's coming up,
I shall not survive the racket
Of this brutal Lisbon Packet. . . .

XXIV

The ship, called the most holy Trinidada,
Was steering duly for the port Leghorn,
For there the Spanish family Moncada
Were settled long ere Juan's sire was born.
They were relations, and for them he had a
Letter of introduction, which the morn
Of his departure had been sent him by
His Spanish friends for those in Italy.

Trinidada ✧ The holy Trinity. B. crams the scenery for his drama with symbols of religious piety, the better to contrast the depravity to come. His critics called it "blasphemy", of course.

Leghorn ✧ The Italian port of Livorno, more than 900 nautical miles from Cadiz: probably a 3 week voyage.

XXV

His suite consisted of three servants and
A tutor, the licentiate Pedrillo,
Who several languages did understand,
But now lay sick and speechless on his pillow,
And rocking in his hammock, longed for land,
His headache being increased by every billow.
And the waves oozing through the porthole made
His berth a little damp, and him afraid.

licentiate ✧ Lit. someone with a graduate qualification, but in this case someone with a license to preach but no ecclesiastical appointment. ***PC*** speculates that B. may have had his own travelling companion, Cam Hobhouse, in mind when he drew the portrait of Pedrillo.

` *'Twas not without some reason. . .*

XXVI

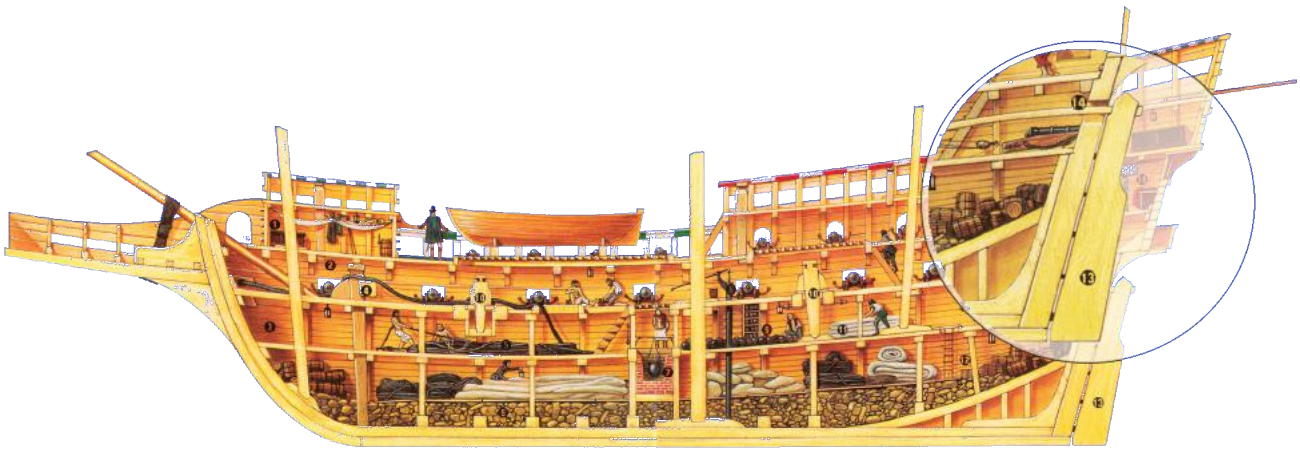
'Twas not without some reason, for the wind
    Increased at night until it blew a gale;
And though 'twas not much to a naval mind,
    Some landsmen would have looked a little pale,
For sailors are in fact a different kind.
    At sunset they began to take in sail,
For the sky showed it would come on to blow
And carry away perhaps a mast or so.

XXVII

At one o'clock the wind with sudden shift
    Threw the ship right into the trough of the sea,
Which struck her aft and made an awkward rift,
    Started the sternpost, also shattered the
Whole of her stern-frame, and ere she could lift
    Herself from out her present jeopardy
The rudder tore away.'Twas time to sound
The pumps, and there were four feet water found.

Sources ✧ ***PC*** has traced much of the following account of the wreck of the *Trinidada* to almost direct quotations, cleverly integrated, from a number of books on shipwrecks — especially *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea*, by Sir John Dalyell (1812), which provides much of the text used in verses XXIII to XXXII. B. also consulted books by the notorious Capt. William Bligh (of *The Bounty*) and an autobiography of B.'s grandfather, Admiral Hon. John Byron, known as *"Foul Weather Jack"*. B. acknowledged his borrowings to Murray, claiming "*no writer ever borrowed less... or made his material more his own.*" Dayell's account of the loss of the ship Hercules in 1796 reads, in part: *"Night came on worse than the day had been, and a sudden shift of wind, about midnight, threw the ship into the trough of the sea, which struck her aft, tore away the rudder, started the stern-post, and shattered the whole of her stern frame. The pumps were immediately sounded, and, in the course of a few minutes the water had increased to four feet."*

` *One gang of people...*



Started the sternpost ✒ This is a cut-away drawing of an 18th century Spanish caravel: a war-ship but a design similar to that described by Byon. The *stern-post* is the large structural member to which the rudder — see the *inset* — is attached. The *stern-frame* comprises all those parts to which it is attached including the keel, at its base, and the transom at its top. If a sea knocked the stern-post from its mounts it would seriously damage the integrity of the hull ... as well as making it almost impossible to steer the ship or to *heave-to*: that is, to set the rudder and reefed-sails in opposition so that the ship could ride-out stormy seas.

XXVIII

One gang of people instantly was put
    Upon the pumps and the remainder set
To get up part of the cargo and what not,
    But they could not come at the leak as yet.
At last they did get at it really, but
    Still their salvation was an even bet.
The water rushed through in a way quite puzzling,
While they thrust sheets, shirts, jackets, bales of muslin

XXIX

Into the opening, but all such ingredients
    Would have been vain, and they must have gone down,
Despite of all their efforts and expedients,
    But for the pumps. I'm glad to make them known
To all the brother tars who may have need hence,
    For fifty tons of water were upthrown
By them per hour, and they had all been undone
But for the maker, Mr Mann, of London.

XXX

As day advanced the weather seemed to abate,
    And then the leak they reckoned to reduce
And keep the ship afloat, though three feet yet
    Kept two hand and one chain pump still in use.
The wind blew fresh again; as it grew late
    A squall came on, and while some guns broke loose,
A gust, which all descriptive power transcends,
Laid with one blast the ship on her beam ends.

XXXI

There she lay, motionless, and seemed upset.
    The water left the hold and washed the decks
And made a scene men do not soon forget,
    For they remember battles, fires, and wrecks,
Or any other thing that brings regret
    Or breaks their hopes or hearts or heads or necks.
Thus drownings are much talked of by the divers
And swimmers who may chance to be survivors.

Source ✧ Sir John Dayell continues…: *"One gang was instantly put on them, and the remainder of the people employed in getting up rice from the run of the ship, and heaving it over, to come to the leak if possible. After three or four hundred bags were thrown into the sea, we did get at it, and found the water rushing into the ship with astonishing rapidity; therefore we thrust sheets, shirts, jackets, bales of muslin, and everything of the like description that could be got, into the opening. Notwithstanding the pumps discharged fifty tons of water an hour, the ship must certainly have gone down had not our expedients been attended with some success. The pumps, to the excellent construction of which I owe the preservation of my life, were made by Mr. Mann of London"*. It seems B. hit on the word "muslin" that he had once before rhymed with "puzzling" when describing Inez' costume in Canto I

Hon. John Byron ❦ *Foul-weather Jack* — B.'s grandfather — painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The family resemblance is evident.

on her beam ends ✧ A *beam* is an obsolete word for a tree or mast. This expression means the ship was knocked on its side, masts touching the water. The weight of the loose guns, rolling across the deck, would have helped the tilt against the weight of the ballast and any sail set would collect water and stop the ship from righting.

Sir John Dayell's account of the loss of the *Hercules* reads: "*Scarce was this done, when a gust, exceeding in violence every thing of the kind I had ever seen, or could conceive, laid the ship on her beam-ends. The water forsook the hold and appeared between decks, so as to fill the men's hammocks to leeward, the ship lay motionless, and, to all appearance, irrevocably overset*"

XXXII

Immediately the masts were cut away,
Both main and mizen. First the mizen went,
The mainmast followed, but the ship still lay
Like a mere log and baffled our intent.
Foremast and bowsprit were cut down, and they
Eased her at last (although we never meant
To part with all till every hope was blighted),
And then with violence the old ship righted.

main and mizen ✧ In the image, above, of a caravel, the mizzen is the mast closest to the stern. The main mast is the mast in the centre of the ship, immediately in front of the mizzen.

our intent ✧ ***PC*** notes that the word "our" was a deliberate replacement of the original "their" in the manuscript. He thinks B. was seeking an effect by confusing perspectives. Or, perhaps it was a mistake.

Foremast and bowsprit ✧ The remaining masts. Presumably, the ship righted once there was no more wet sail holding it down in the water.

XXXIII

It may be easily supposed, while this
Was going on, some people were unquiet,
That passengers would find it much amiss
To lose their lives as well as spoil their diet,
That even the able seaman, deeming his
Days nearly o'er, might be disposed to riot,
As upon such occasions tars will ask
For grog and sometimes drink rum from the cask.

XXXIV

There's nought no doubt so much the spirit calms
As rum and true religion; thus it was,
Some plundered, some drank spirits, some sung psalms.
The high wind made the treble, and as bass
The hoarse harsh waves kept time. Fright cured the qualms
Of all the luckless landsmen's seasick maws.
Strange sounds of wailing, blasphemy, devotion
Clamoured in chorus to the roaring ocean.

rum and true religion ✧ An epithet for the ages. "*Don't talk to me about naval tradition*", said Churchill,"*It's nothing but rum, sodomy, and the lash!*". A still later version has it as: "*Rum, bum and phonograph records*". Hobhouse attempted to replace the phrase in the manuscript but B. restored it with an exclamation "*Bah!*"

maws ✧ Bellies, usually of animals.

XXXV

Perhaps more mischief had been done, but for
Our Juan, who with sense beyond his years,
Got to the spirit-room and stood before
It with a pair of pistols. And their fears,
As if Death were more dreadful by his door
Of fire than water, spite of oaths and tears,
Kept still aloof the crew, who ere they sunk,
Thought it would be becoming to die drunk.

Got to the spirit-room ✧ *"A midshipman was appointed to guard the spirit-room, to repress that unhappy desire of a devoted crew to die in a state of intoxication. The sailors, though, in other respects orderly in conduct, here pressed eagerly upon him. "Give us some grog," they exclaimed, "it will be all one an hour hence." "I know we must die," replied the gallant officer, coolly, "but let us die like men;" armed with a brace of pistols, he kept his post, even while the ship was sinking"*: Sir John Dayell on the loss of the *Earl of Abergavenny*, quoted in ***PC***

XXXVI

'Give us more grog,' they cried, 'for it will be
All one an hour hence.' Juan answered, 'No!
'Tis true that death awaits both you and me,
But let us die like men, not sink below
Like brutes.' And thus his dangerous post kept he,
And none liked to anticipate the blow,
And even Pedrillo, his most reverend tutor,
Was for some rum a disappointed suitor.

XXXVII

The good old gentleman was quite aghast
And made a loud and pious lamentation,
Repented all his sins, and made a last
Irrevocable vow of reformation:
Nothing should tempt him more (this peril past)
To quit his academic occupation
In cloisters of the classic Salamanca,
To follow Juan's wake like Sancho Panca.

Sancho Panca ✧ i.e. *Sancho Panaza*, Don Quixote's squire. In the tradition of the Grand Tour, the young noble traveller was usually accompanied by a chaperone known, jokingly, as a "bear-leader" (someone who manages an unruly animal). Pedrillio is too well-educated to be a Sancho Panza and too weak-willed to be a bear-leader.

XXXVIII

But now there came a flash of hope once more;
Day broke, and the wind lulled. The masts were gone,
The leak increased, shoals round her, but no shore;
The vessel swam, yet still she held her own.
They tried the pumps again, and though before
Their desperate efforts seemed all useless grown,
A glimpse of sunshine set some hands to bale;
The stronger pumped, the weaker thrummed a sail.

thrummed a sail ✧ A *thrum* is scrap of rope end or thread. Sailors reinforced the fabric by of a sail by threading pieces of hemp rope through it. The idea was to prevent the sail chafing or tearing on the barnacles adhering to the hull and to make it swell to fill a leak.

XXXIX

Under the vessel's keel the sail was past,
And for the moment it had some effect;
But with a leak and not a stick of mast
Nor rag of canvas, what could they expect?
But still'tis best to struggle to the last,
'Tis never too late to be wholly wrecked.
And though'tis true that man can only die once,
'Tis not so pleasant in the Gulf of Lyons.

Gulf of Lyons ✧ Now normally written as the *Gulf of Lion*, this is a large bay that extends around the northern shore of the Mediterranean from the Spanish border to Marseille and Toulon. Sailors know it for the tempestuous weather caused by two cold northerly winds that sweep into the Bay: the *Mistral* and *Tramontane*. The winds have similar origins: a steep difference in atmospheric pressures between the Atlantic and northwest of Europe (high pressures) and the Gulf of Lion (low pressures). The winds gather speed and force travelling south, by different routes, funnelled by the Pyrenees and the Massif Central of France (the Tramontane) or the Massif Central and the Alps (the Mistral). The *Trinidada* has by this time travelled almost half way to its destination.

XL

There winds and waves had hurled them, and from thence
Without their will they carried them away,
For they were forced with steering to dispense,
And never had as yet a quiet day
On which they might repose, or even commence
A jury mast or rudder, or could say
The ship would swim an hour, which by good luck
Still swam—though not exactly like a duck.

A jury mast ✧ A jury mast (or rudder) is one tricked from other materials, such as a spar or an oar, to serve a temporary use, such as when the real thing breaks. The word may derive from the Old French word *ajurie*, meaning "help".

XLI

The wind in fact perhaps was rather less,
But the ship laboured so, they scarce could hope
To weather out much longer. The distress
Was also great with which they had to cope
For want of water, and their solid mess
Was scant enough. In vain the telescope
Was used; nor sail nor shore appeared in sight,
Nought but the heavy sea and coming night.

XLII

Again the weather threatened, again blew
A gale, and in the fore and after hold
Water appeared; yet though the people knew
All this, the most were patient, and some bold,
Until the chains and leathers were worn through
Of all our pumps. A wreck complete she rolled
At mercy of the waves, whose mercies are
Like human beings during civil war.

Sources ✧ Most of this detail is taken, again, from Sir John Dayell; perhaps the reason B. slips from a third-person account to a first person pronoun "our".

Chains and leathers ✧ Not as *punk* as it may sound. A chain pump comprised a chain set with flat disks every few links that ran through a pair of tubes of the same internal diameter as the disks. The pumps were immersed in the ship's bilge and operated by turning a wheel at the top of the pump to draw the water up. The British Admiralty specified chain pumps on its warships from the middle of the 18th century. Once the pumps failed, the ship would be in dire trouble.

XLIII

Then came the carpenter, at last, with tears
In his rough eyes and told the captain he
Could do no more. He was a man in years
And long had voyaged through many a stormy sea,
And if he wept at length, they were not fears
That made his eyelids as a woman's be,
But he, poor fellow, had a wife and children,
Two things for dying people quite bewildering.

He could do no more ✧ The ships' carpenter was in charge of temporarily plugging and then repairing the breech in the hull; also rigging jury-masts.

XLIV

The ship was evidently settling now
    Fast by the head; and all distinction gone,
Some went to prayers again and made a vow
    Of candles to their saints, but there were none
To pay them with; and some looked o'er the bow;
    Some hoisted out the boats; and there was one
That begged Pedrillo for an absolution,
Who told him to be damned—in his confusion.

head ✧ The ship was sinking *prow*-first. The sailors latrines, called the "heads", were usually located at the prow, just below the level of the main deck. See the unmarked open area below the bowsprit in the illustration of the caravel.

XLV

Some lashed them in their hammocks; some put on
    Their best clothes, as if going to a fair;
Some cursed the day on which they saw the sun
    And gnashed their teeth and howling tore their hair;
And others went on as they had begun,
    Getting the boats out, being well aware
That a tight boat will live in a rough sea,
Unless with breakers close beneath her lee.

Lashed. . . best clothes ✧ More details from Dayell.

lee ✧ The side of a boat opposite to the windward — or luff — side. A boat that is being blown into the breakers on her leeward side is likely to be swamped.

XLVI

The worst of all was that in their condition,
    Having been several days in great distress,
'Twas difficult to get out such provision
    As now might render their long suffering less.
Men, even when dying, dislike inanition.
    Their stock was damaged by the weather's stress;
Two casks of biscuit and a keg of butter
Were all that could be thrown into the cutter.

XLVII

But in the longboat they contrived to stow
    Some pounds of bread, though injured by the wet;
Water, a twenty gallon cask or so;
    Six flasks of wine. And they contrived to get
A portion of their beef up from below,
    And with a piece of pork moreover met,
But scarce enough to serve them for a luncheon;
Then there was rum, eight gallons in a puncheon.

XLVIII

The other boats, the yawl and pinnace, had
Been stove in the beginning of the gale;
And the longboat's condition was but bad,
As there were but two blankets for a sail
And one oar for a mast, which a young lad
Threw in by good luck over the ship's rail.
And two boats could not hold, far less be stored,
To save one half the people then on board.

stored ✧ provisioned.

XLIX

'Twas twilight and the sunless day went down
Over the waste of waters. Like a veil,
Which if withdrawn would but disclose the frown
Of one whose hate is masked but to assail,
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown
And grimly darkled o'er their faces pale
And the dim desolate deep. Twelve days had Fear
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

L

Some trial had been making at a raft
With little hope in such a rolling sea,
A sort of thing at which one would have laughed,
If any laughter at such times could be,
Unless with people who too much have quaffed
And have a kind of wild and horrid glee,
Half epileptical and half hysterical.
Their preservation would have been a miracle.

LI

At half past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars
And all things for a chance had been cast loose,
That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
For yet they strove, although of no great use.
There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews.
She gave a heel and then a lurch to port,
And going down head foremost—sunk, in short.

LII

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell,
    Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave,
Then some leaped overboard with dreadful yell,
    As eager to anticipate their grave.
And the sea yawned around her like a hell,
    And down she sucked with her the whirling wave,
Like one who grapples with his enemy
And strives to strangle him before he die.

LIII

And first one universal shriek there rushed,
    Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder, and then all was hushed,
    Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
Of billows; but at intervals there gushed,
    Accompanied with a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

LIV

The boats, as stated, had got off before,
    And in them crowded several of the crew.
And yet their present hope was hardly more
    Than what it had been, for so strong it blew
There was slight chance of reaching any shore.
    And then they were too many, though so few,
Nine in the cutter, thirty in the boat
Were counted in them when they got afloat.

The boats, as stated ✧ Not quite. B. has so far mentioned a yawl and pinnace and a longboat. The first two are small two-masted sail-or-row boats that were "stove" i.e. holed and so unable to carry crew, leaving only the longboat. But later in this verse B. also mentions a cutter — another two-masted style of small sail boat — that briefly holds nine survivors.

LV

All the rest perished; near two hundred souls
    Had left their bodies. And what's worse, alas,
When over Catholics the ocean rolls,
    They must wait several weeks before a mass
Takes off one peck of purgatorial coals,
    Because, till people know what's come to pass,
They won't lay out their money on the dead.
It costs three francs for every mass that's said.

When over Catholics ✧ A cheap shot, but a funny one. In Catholic tradition there could be no *Requiem* Mass said without the presence of a body. Instead there would be a *Memorial* Mass for which some (unspecified) stipend would usually be offered to the priest. The Memorial would necessarily omit the ceremony of the *Absolution of the Dead*, performed over the coffin after the Requiem Mass, that was intended as a plea for release of the soul of the departed from Purgatory, where minor infractions were proportionately punished by, you know… burning with hot coals.

LVI

Juan got into the longboat and there
    Contrived to help Pedrillo to a place.
It seemed as if they had exchanged their care,
    For Juan wore the magisterial face
Which courage gives, while poor Pedrillo's pair
    Of eyes were crying for their owner's case.
Battista, though (a name called shortly Tita),
Was lost by getting at some aqua vita.

LVII

Pedro, his valet, too he tried to save,
    But the same cause, conducive to his loss,
Left him so drunk he jumped into the wave
    As o'er the cutter's edge he tried to cross,
And so he found a wine-and-watery grave.
    They could not rescue him although so close,
Because the sea ran higher every minute,
And for the boat—the crew kept crowding in it.

LVIII

A small old spaniel, which had been Don Jóse's,
    His father's, whom he loved as ye may think
(For on such things the memory reposes
    With tenderness), stood howling on the brink,
Knowing (dogs have such intellectual noses),
    No doubt the vessel was about to sink.
And Juan caught him up and ere he stepped
Off threw him in, then after him he leaped.

LIX

He also stuffed his money where he could
    About his person and Pedrillo's too,
Who let him do in fact whate'er he would,
    Not knowing what himself to say or do,
As every rising wave his dread renewed.
    But Juan, trusting they might still get through
And deeming there were remedies for any ill,
Thus re-embarked his tutor and his spaniel.

Tita ✧ The name of B.'s gondolier — as he drafted this Canto — the leonine Giovanni Battista Falcieri. Tita was a favorite with B., who kept him on as a bodyguard and messenger until the end in Missolonghi. Tita accompanied B.'s body back to England where he finally settled, for a while as a servant in the Disraeli family.

aqua vita ✧ Distilled spirits, probably brandy.

wine-and-watery grave ✧ Wine and water is the mix used in the Catholic sacrament of the eucharist. B. is warming to his topic; the blasphemous eucharist to come.

LX

'Twas a rough night and blew so stiffly yet
That the sail was becalmed between the seas,
Though on the wave's high top too much to set,
They dared not take it in for all the breeze.
Each sea curled o'er the stern and kept them wet
And made them bail without a moment's ease,
So that themselves as well as hopes were damped,
And the poor little cutter quickly swamped.

LXI

Nine souls more went in her. The longboat still
Kept above water, with an oar for mast.
Two blankets stitched together, answering ill
Instead of sail, were to the oar made fast.
Though every wave rolled menacing to fill,
And present peril all before surpassed,
They grieved for those who perished with the cutter,
And also for the biscuit casks and butter.

LXII

The sun rose red and fiery, a sure sign
Of the continuance of the gale. To run
Before the sea until it should grow fine
Was all that for the present could be done.
A few teaspoonfuls of their rum and wine
Were served out to the people, who begun
To faint, and damaged bread wet through the bags.
And most of them had little clothes but rags.

LXIII

They counted thirty, crowded in a space
Which left scarce room for motion or exertion.
They did their best to modify their case;
One half sate up, though numbed with the immersion
While t'other half were laid down in their place,
At watch and watch. Thus, shivering like the tertian
Ague in its cold fit, they filled their boat,
With nothing but the sky for a greatcoat.

Sources This stanza, and the account of the sail loosing wind between the high waves, is taken almost directly from William Bligh's account of his run to Timor — almost 7,000 kms — in an open boat after being set adrift by the Bounty mutineers. Bligh, seen here in a miniature by Alexander Huey, was a great navigator and cartographer who, however, had an uncompromising attitude, bad temper and a tyrannical leadership style.

sun rose red and fiery ✧ This stanza, too, relies directly on Capt. Bligh's account.

the tertian Ague ✧ A fever recurring every other day. A tertian ague was usually malaria

LXIV

'Tis very certain the desire of life
Prolongs it; this is obvious to physicians,
When patients, neither plagued with friends nor wife,
Survive through very desperate conditions,
Because they still can hope, nor shines the knife
Nor shears of Atropos before their visions.
Despair of all recovery spoils longevity,
And makes men's miseries of alarming brevity.

LXV

'Tis said that persons living on annuities
Are longer lived than others, God knows why,
Unless to plague the grantors; yet so true it is,
That some, I really think, do never die.
Of any creditors the worst a Jew it is,
And that's their mode of furnishing supply.
In my young days they lent me cash that way,
Which I found very troublesome to pay.

LXVI

'Tis thus with people in an open boat;
They live upon the love of life and bear
More than can be believed or even thought,
And stand like rocks the tempest's wear and tear.
And hardship still has been the sailor's lot,
Since Noah's ark went cruising here and there.
She had a curious crew as well as cargo,
Like the first old Greek privateer, the Argo.

LXVII

But man is a carnivorous production
And must have meals, at least one meal a day.
He cannot live like woodcocks upon suction,
But like the shark and tiger must have prey.
Although his anatomical construction
Bears vegetables in a grumbling way,
Your labouring people think beyond all question,
Beef, veal, and mutton better for digestion.

Atropos ✒ Bernardo Strozzi's 17th century painting of the Three Fates (Moirai). In the Greek tradition, the sisters were Clotho, who spun the thread, Lachesis, who measured it out and Atropos, the eldest, who cut the thread of life.

Of any creditors ✧ B. means, *possibly*, that money-lenders' clients are kept alive by the necessity of paying their debts. B. was heavily in debt to London money-lenders, conventionally called Jews, for much of his life after extravagant living in Cambridge and London. He set off on his Grand Tour in 1809 — funded by a £5,000 loan from his friend Scrope Davies — with debts to the money-lenders amounting to £30,000. He finally quit these debts only after selling Newstead Abbey in 1818.

Noah's ark ✧ A second reference to the story from *Genesis*. Invoking Biblical and mythic sources in the same jokey tone no doubt scandalised some of B's readers, probably as he intended.

the Argo ✧ The ship that, according to legend, Jason and his Argonauts sailed into the Black Sea in search of the Golden Fleece. In a kind of *prequel* for the Homeric epics of the Trojan war — the Argo's adventure takes place ten year before the war — the "curious crew" comprised *cameo* parts for many of the big-names in the mythic franchise. Among them were Atalanta, the virgin huntress; Asclepius the patron of medicine; the musician Orpheus; Hercules, and; the fathers of the heroes of the Trojan war: Achilles (Peleus), Odysseus (Laertes) and Ajax (Telemon).

woodcocks ✧ A game bird that lives mostly on earthworms. Its bill has a flexible tip to grip the worm as it emerges from its burrow, so that that the Woodcock appears to suck them up from the ground.

vegetables ✧ ***PC*** notes that B. subsisted for long periods on a vegetarian diet in his chronic attempts to control his weight.

LXVIII

And thus it was with this our hapless crew,
For on the third day there came on a calm,
And though at first their strength it might renew,
And lying on their weariness like balm,
Lulled them like turtles sleeping on the blue
Of ocean, when they woke they felt a qualm
And fell all ravenously on their provision,
Instead of hoarding it with due precision.

LXIX

The consequence was easily foreseen:
They ate up all they had and drank their wine
In spite of all remonstrances, and then
On what in fact next day were they to dine?
They hoped the wind would rise, these foolish men,
And carry them to shore. These hopes were fine,
But as they had but one oar, and that brittle,
It would have been more wise to save their victual.

LXX

The fourth day came, but not a breath of air,
And ocean slumbered like an unweaned child.
The fifth day, and their boat lay floating there,
The sea and sky were blue and clear and mild.
With their one oar (I wish they had had a pair)
What could they do? And hunger's rage grew wild,
So Juan's spaniel, spite of his entreating,
Was killed and portioned out for present eating.

LXXI

On the sixth day they fed upon his hide,
And Juan, who had still refused, because
The creature was his father's dog that died,
Now feeling all the vulture in his jaws,
With some remorse received (though first denied)
As a great favour one of the forepaws,
Which he divided with Pedrillo, who
Devoured it, longing for the other too.

ONE OF THE FOREPAWS ✧ B. takes this delectable detail from his grandfather's account of being marooned, as a young midshipman, after the wreck of *HMS Wager* off the coast of Southern Chile. Foul-weather Jack, too, dined on the hide and forepaws of his own dog.

LXXII

The seventh day and no wind. The burning sun
    Blistered and scorched, and stagnant on the sea
They lay like carcasses, and hope was none,
    Save in the breeze that came not. Savagely
They glared upon each other. All was done,
    Water and wine and food, and you might see
The longings of the cannibal arise
(Although they spoke not) in their wolfish eyes.

longings of the cannibal ✧ A gothic notion that cannibalism is a kind of uncontrolled animal lust. ***PC*** shows that Byron borrowed many details for the cannibalism episode from Dayell's account of six men who deserted the Artillery on the island of St Helena. John Byron's *Narrative* also recalls his stranded shipmates considering a murder for the purpose of cannibalism:"*that dreadful and last resort of men…*"

LXXIII

At length one whispered his companion, who
    Whispered another, and thus it went round,
And then into a hoarser murmur grew,
    An ominous and wild and desperate sound,
And when his comrade's thought each sufferer knew,
    'Twas but his own, suppressed till now, he found.
And out they spoke of lots for flesh and blood,
And who should die to be his fellow's food.

LXXIV

But ere they came to this, they that day shared
    Some leathern caps and what remained of shoes;
And then they looked around them and despaired,
    And none to be the sacrifice would choose.
At length the lots were torn up and prepared,
    But of materials that much shock the Muse.
Having no paper, for the want of better,
They took by force from Juan Julia's letter.

Julia's letter ✧ *Sic transit amor*: this is the last we hear of Julia: her touching farewell shredded in the service of cannibals. No wonder the *Muse* is shocked.

The lots were made and marked and mixed and handed ✒ *Le Naufrage de Don Juan*. Eugène Delacroix, 1840. Don Juan and a few survivors from a shipwreck draw lots for whom would be sacrificed to feed his starving companions. Delacroix probably painted this in the 1820s at the very beginning of his career.

LXXV

The lots were made and marked and mixed and handed
In silent horror, and their distribution
Lulled even the savage hunger which demanded,
Like the Promethean vulture, this pollution.
None in particular had sought or planned it;
'Twas nature gnawed them to this resolution,
By which none were permitted to be neuter,
And the lot fell on Juan's luckless tutor.

LXXVI

He but requested to be bled to death.
The surgeon had his instruments and bled
Pedrillo, and so gently ebbed his breath
You hardly could perceive when he was dead.
He died as born, a Catholic in faith,
Like most in the belief in which they're bred,
And first a little crucifix he kissed,
And then held out his jugular and wrist

LXXVII

The surgeon, as there was no other fee,
Had his first choice of morsels for his pains,
But being thirstiest at the moment, he
Preferred a draught from the fast-flowing veins.
Part was divided, part thrown in the sea,
And such things as the entrails and the brains
Regaled two sharks who followed o'er the billow.
The sailors ate the rest of poor Pedrillo.

LXXVIII

The sailors ate him, all save three or four,
Who were not quite so fond of animal food.
To these was added Juan, who, before
Refusing his own spaniel, hardly could
Feel now his appetite increased much more.
'Twas not to be expected that he should,
Even in extremity of their disaster,
Dine with them on his pastor and his master.

Prometheus Byron refers several times in ***Don Juan*** to the myth of the Titan Prometheus who stole fire — the source of metal-working and science — from the smithy of Hephaistos on Mt Olympus and gave it to man against the wishes of the Gods. Zeus punished him eternally by chaining him, exposed, on Mt. Caucasus where by day an eagle — or perhaps a vulture — fed on his liver that regrew every night. B. is less interested here in the divine defiance of Prometheus than in a powerful image of "savage hunger" as a vulture tearing at the guts. The painting is by Peter Paul Rubens whose fleshiness B. did not admire so much.

a little crucifix he kissed ✧ B. intends us to see this as a religious ceremony; Pedrillo going meekly to the slaughter.

Pedrillo ✧ B. continues to ignore the Spanish pronunciation; it gives him a trite rhyme that contrasts and comically enhances the horror.

his pastor and his master ✧ B.'s explanation of Juan's still greater reluctance to eat his ordained tutor than to eat his dog, allows him, tacitly, to recall the eucharist that celebrates Christ's instructions to his Disciples to dine on the body of their *pastor* (lit. shepherd) and Master.

LXXIX

'Twas better that he did not, for in fact
The consequence was awful in the extreme.
For they who were most ravenous in the act
Went raging mad. Lord! how they did blaspheme
And foam and roll, with strange convulsions racked,
Drinking salt water like a mountain stream,
Tearing and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing,
And with hyena laughter died despairing.

awful in the extreme ✧ The gothic horror mounts. B. has the authority of his sources for these lurid consequences of *abomination*; but it's completely fanciful. Drinking sea-water is decidedly foolish. Sea-water is about 3 percent salt but the human kidneys can excrete excess salt in the urine only at a concentration of about 2 percent. The tissues of the body must surrender any stored water to allow this dilution to happen. So drinking sea-water de-hydrates rather than re-hydrates.

LXXX

Their numbers were much thinned by this infliction,
And all the rest were *thin enough*, heaven knows,
And some of them had lost their recollection,
Happier than they who still perceived their woes,
But others pondered on a new dissection,
As if not warned sufficiently by those
Who had already perished, suffering madly,
For having used their appetites so sadly.

thin enough ✧ Emaciation jokes! B. is testing the boundaries of taste, with glee.

LXXXI

And next they thought upon the master's mate
As fattest, but he saved himself, because,
Besides being much averse from such a fate,
There were some other reasons: the first was
He had been rather indisposed of late,
And that which chiefly proved his saving clause
Was a small present made to him at Cadiz,
By general subscription of the ladies.

a small present ✧ A syphilitic chancre, of course.

general subscription ✧ Too much *whoring*. B. means the ladies clubbed together to make this present to him, each by contributing something.

LXXXII

Of poor Pedrillo something still remained,
But was used sparingly. Some were afraid,
And others still their appetites constrained,
Or but at times a little supper made;
All except Juan, who throughout abstained,
Chewing a piece of bamboo and some lead.
At length they caught two boobies and a noddy,
And then they left off eating the dead body.

bamboo and some lead ✧ A story from the 1802 wreck of the Spanish warship *Juno* about the survivors chewing bits of lead or wood to bring saliva to the mouth to give some relief from thirst. Thos. Moore, in his biography of B., says he had read about the wreck of the Juno while at school in Dulwich (before switching to Harrow).

two boobies and a noddy ✧ Sea birds. So called because they are easily caught by hand when they alight and are reputed to be "dummies". Capt. William Bligh records his starving companions in *The Bounty's* longboat catching these birds.

LXXXIII

And if Pedrillo's fate should shocking be,
Remember Ugolino condescends
To eat the head of his archenemy,
The moment after he politely ends
His tale. If foes be food in hell, at sea
'Tis surely fair to dine upon our friends
When shipwreck's short allowance grows too scanty,
Without being much more horrible than Dante.

LXXXIV

And the same night there fell a shower of rain,
For which their mouths gaped like the cracks of earth
When dried to summer dust. Till taught by pain,
Men really know not what good water's worth.
If you had been in Turkey or in Spain,
Or with a famished boat's crew had your berth,
Or in the desert heard the camel's bell,
You'd wish yourself where truth is—in a well.

LXXXV

It poured down torrents, but they were no richer
Until they found a ragged piece of sheet,
Which served them as a sort of spongy pitcher,
And when they deemed its moisture was complete,
They wrung it out, and though a thirsty ditcher
Might not have thought the scanty draught so sweet
As a full pot of porter, to their thinking
They ne'er till now had known the joys of drinking.

LXXXVI

And their baked lips, with many a bloody crack,
Sucked in the moisture, which like nectar streamed.
Their throats were ovens, their swoll'n tongues were black,
As the rich man's in hell, who vainly screamed
To beg the beggar, who could not rain back
A drop of dew, when every drop had seemed
To taste of heaven. If this be true, indeed
Some Christians have a comfortable creed.

Ugolino. . . more horrible than Dante ✧ In Book XXXIII of the *Inferno*, Dante meets the ghost of Ugolino della Gherardesca, a Pisan nobleman who, during the 13th century civil wars, switched sides once too often. He was imprisoned by his enemies with his two sons and two grandsons in a tower. On the orders of the Archbishop of Pisa, the keys to their cell were thrown in the river and they were allowed to starve to death. In Dante's poem, Ugolino recalls at one point biting his hand in grief for the fate of his children. Seeing this, and thinking it was hunger made him do so, his sons said: "*Father, it will much less painful for us if you eat us. You clothed us in this wretched flesh, strip it from us yourself.*". Dante imagines Uguolino taking revenge on the bishop eternally in hell by eating his head. B.s claim that Dante's grisly tale puts his facetious fable *in perspective* is one of his many ironic protests in ***Don⚔Juan*** that his "*excesses*" are no greater than those of classical authors and their works.

Ugolino ✒ Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *Michelangeliste* portrayal of Ugolino in prison, tearing at his own face, angry and starving, is in the Metropolitan Museum in N.Y.

truth is—in a well ✧ Either the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (6th century B.C.E.) or, perhaps, Democritus of Abdera (5th century B.C.E.) said that truth was to be found only with great difficulty, as if buried and neglected at the bottom of a well.

LXXXVII

There were two fathers in this ghastly crew
And with them their two sons, of whom the one
Was more robust and hardy to the view,
But he died early, and when he was gone,
His nearest messmate told his sire, who threw
One glance on him and said, 'Heaven's will be done!
I can do nothing,' and he saw him thrown
Into the deep without a tear or groan.

LXXXVIII

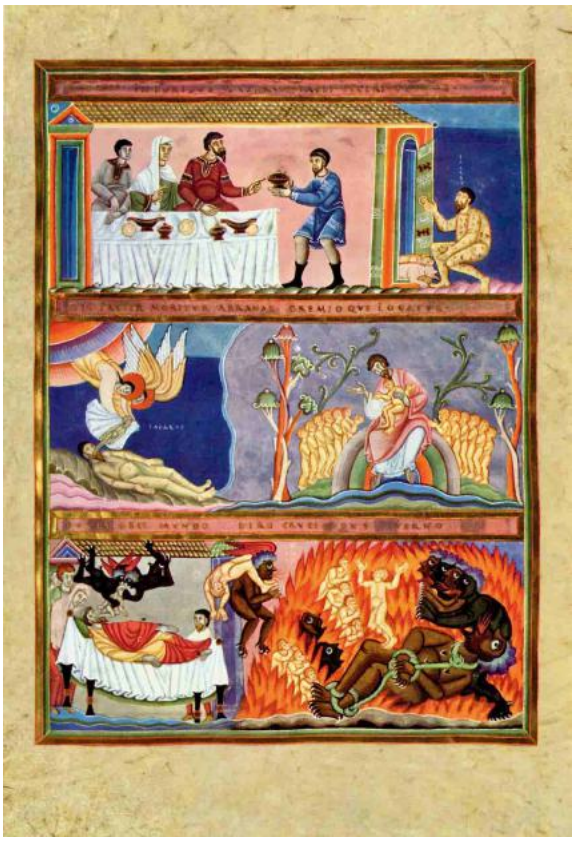
The other father had a weaklier child,
Of a soft cheek and aspect delicate,
But the boy bore up long and with a mild
And patient spirit held aloof his fate.
Little he said and now and then he smiled,
As if to win a part from off the weight
He saw increasing on his father's heart,
With the deep deadly thought that they must part

LXXXIX

And o'er him bent his sire and never raised
His eyes from off his face, but wiped the foam
From his pale lips, and ever on him gazed,
And when the wished-for shower at length was come,
And the boy's eyes, which the dull film half glazed,
Brightened and for a moment seemed to roam,
He squeezed from out a rag some drops of rain
Into his dying child's mouth—but in vain.

XC

The boy expired. The father held the clay
And looked upon it long, and when at last
Death left no doubt, and the dead burden lay
Stiff on his heart, and pulse and hope were past,
He watched it wistfully, until away
'Twas borne by the rude wave wherein'twas cast.
Then he himself sunk down all dumb and shivering,
And gave no sign of life, save his limbs quivering.



THE RICH MAN'S IN HELL ❧ A reference to Jesus' parable (Luke, 16) of Lazarus the beggar, who goes to heaven, and Dives the wealthy man, who goes to Hell either because he had been uncharitable to Lazarus or because he was wealthy. Or both. Lazarus spurns Dives' cry from Hell for relief because... Call it *social justice* if you wish: that is what Jesus seems to mean. Still, it prompts some to indulge a self-satisfied triumph in the suffering of others that B. describes, sarcastically, as a "comfortable creed". The image is from an 11th century illustrated gospel.

TWO FATHERS IN THIS GHASTLY CREW... ✧ This story, too, taken from an account of the wreck of the *Juno* that B. may be recalling from his schoolboy reading. ***PC*** notes that B.'s account seems to be influenced, too, by Ugolino's account of the death of his sons in Canto XXXIII of Dante's *Inferno*.

XCI

Now overhead a rainbow, bursting through
The scattering clouds, shone, spanning the dark sea,
Resting its bright base on the quivering blue,
And all within its arch appeared to be
Clearer than that without, and its wide hue
Waxed broad and waving, like a banner free,
Then changed like to a bow that's bent, and then
Forsook the dim eyes of these shipwrecked men.

XCII

It changed of course—a heavenly chameleon,
The airy child of vapour and the sun,
Brought forth in purple, cradled in vermilion,
Baptized in molten gold and swathed in dun,
Glittering like crescents o'er a Turk's pavilion
And blending every colour into one,
Just like a black eye in a recent scuffle
(For sometimes we must box without the muffle).

XCIII

Our shipwrecked seamen thought it a good omen;
It is as well to think so now and then.
'Twas an old custom of the Greek and Roman,
And may become of great advantage when
Folks are discouraged; and most surely no men
Had greater need to nerve themselves again
Than these, and so this rainbow looked like hope,
Quite a celestial kaleidoscope.

XCIV

About this time a beautiful white bird,
Webfooted, not unlike a dove in size
And plumage (probably it might have erred
Upon its course), passed oft before their eyes
And tried to perch, although it saw and heard
The men within the boat, and in this guise
It came and went and fluttered round them till
Night fell. This seemed a better omen still.

A rainbow ✧ The rainbow and the dove-like bird (*Stanza XCIV*) are, again, echoes of the story of Noah in the Book of Genesis where the rainbow is described as the sign of God's covenant with mankind not to wipe out all living things because of man's sin.

Glittering like crescents ✧ The golden crescent was already a symbol of the Ottoman Turks before they took Constantinople in 1453 and made it their capital. The symbol had long been associated with Byzantium — Constantinople's former name — as the symbol of the Moon Goddess Astarte (or Hecate) who had protected the city from the invasion of Philip of Macedon in the 4th century B.C.E

box without the muffle ✧ Bare-knuckle boxing. The twenty-something B. — in an effort to control his weight — trained with "Gentleman John" Jackson, former Champion of England in bare-knuckle boxing, at his fashionable studio in Bond St. in London. B. wore gloves, however, a pair of which is preserved at Newstead.

kaleidoscope ✧ Its not clear what B. means by describing the rainbow this way, except perhaps as a mutable vision of pleasing colors. ***PC*** suggests B. includes the line as a sort of *wink* to his publisher. He notes: "... [The kaleidescope was] *invented by Sir David Brewster in 1817. Murray sent B. one on September 22 1818, a month before he started writing Canto II, describing it as ... a newly invented Toy which if not yet seen in Venice will I trust amuse some of your female friends*" The instrument was extremely popular: although Brewster patented it, it was immediately pirated and sold in the hundreds of thousands.

a beautiful white bird ✧ There are several echoes in these stanzas of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which was published in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballards* in 1798: for example the image of "baked lips with many a bloody crack" in Stanza LXXXVI. Here is another: the albatross that the Mariner killed (and that became an eternal burden to him) was just such a white bird with webbed feet, although much larger than a dove. ***PC*** believes, however, that B. bases this incident on another shipwreck story from Dayell.

XCV

But in this case I also must remark,
'Twas well this bird of promise did not perch,
Because the tackle of our shattered bark
Was not so safe for roosting as a church,
And had it been the dove from Noah's ark,
Returning there from her successful search,
Which in their way that moment chanced to fall,
They would have eat her, olive branch and all.

olive branch and all ✧ As the waters of the deluge receded, Noah's Ark came to rest on Mt Ararat (*Genesis* 8, 8-12). Three times Noah released a dove to check whether there was dry land. The bird returned the second time with an olive leaf in its beak, indicating the waters had fallen far enough for the trees to stand above the surface. On the third occasion the dove did not return.

XCVI

With twilight it again came on to blow,
But not with violence. The stars shone out,
The boat made way; yet now they were so low
They knew not where nor what they were about.
Some fancied they saw land, and some said, 'No!'
The frequent fog banks gave them cause to doubt.
Some swore that they heard breakers, others guns,
And all mistook about the latter once.

XCVII

As morning broke the light wind died away,
When he who had the watch sung out and swore,
If 'twas not land that rose with the sun's ray,
He wished that land he never might see more.
And the rest rubbed their eyes and saw a bay
Or thought they saw, and shaped their course for shore,
For shore it was and gradually grew
Distinct and high and palpable to view.

XCVIII

And then of these some part burst into tears,
And others, looking with a stupid stare,
Could not yet separate their hopes from fears
And seemed as if they had no further care,
While a few prayed (the first time for some years).
And at the bottom of the boat three were
Asleep; they shook them by the hand and head
And tried to awaken them, but found them dead.

XCIX

The day before, fast sleeping on the water,
They found a turtle of the hawksbill kind,
And by good fortune gliding softly, caught her,
Which yielded a day's life and to their mind
Proved even still a more nutritious matter,
Because it left encouragement behind.
They thought that in such perils more than chance
Had sent them this for their deliverance.

C

The land appeared a high and rocky coast,
And higher grew the mountains as they drew,
Set by a current, toward it. They were lost
In various conjectures, for none knew
To what part of the earth they had been tost,
So changeable had been the winds that blew.
Some thought it was Mount Etna, some the highlands
Of Candia, Cyprus, Rhodes, or other islands.

CI

Meantime the current, with a rising gale,
Still set them onwards to the welcome shore,
Like Charon's bark of spectres, dull and pale.
Their living freight was now reduced to four,
And three dead, whom their strength could not avail
To heave into the deep with those before,
Though the two sharks still followed them and dashed
The spray into their faces as they splashed.

CII

Famine, despair, cold, thirst, and heat had done
Their work on them by turns, and thinned them to
Such things a mother had not known her son
Amidst the skeletons of that gaunt crew.
By night chilled, by day scorched, thus one by one
They perished, until withered to these few,
But chiefly by a species of self-slaughter,
In washing down Pedrillo with salt water.

Mount Etna ✧ These sailors are poor navigators: their speculations on their whereabouts in this line and the next range from Sicily — Mt Etna, the highest peak in the Mediterranean — to near the coast of Turkey (Rhodes). It stretches credulity to suggest that the long-boat could have drifted from the Gulf of Lion to the Aegean. Still, B. wants to land Juan on an island that lies East of the Greek peninsula.

Candia ✧ Crete. The island was so-called from 1204 when the Venetians seized it from the Moslems who had taken it from Byzantine empire four centuries earlier, when it had been called "Crete". It reverted to Greek control and its ancient greek name after Byron's time, since when the Greeks and the Turks have continued to fight for possession of it.

Charon's bark of spectres ❧ Charon was the boat-man who, in Greek myth, rowed the souls of the dead across the rivers Acheron (river of woe) into Hades. This image of the deamon enjoying his dreadful task is from Michelangelo's vision of the *Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

CIII

As they drew nigh the land, which now was seen
Unequal in its aspect here and there,
They felt the freshness of its growing green,
That waved in forest-tops and smoothed the air,
And fell upon their glazed eyes like a screen
From glistening waves and skies so hot and bare.
Lovely seemed any object that should sweep
Away the vast, salt, dread, eternal deep.

CIV

The shore looked wild without a trace of man
And girt by formidable waves; but they
Were mad for land, and thus their course they ran,
Though right ahead the roaring breakers lay.
A reef between them also now began
To show its boiling surf and bounding spray,
But finding no place for their landing better,
They ran the boat for shore and overset her.

CV

But in his native stream, the Guadalquivir,
Juan to lave his youthful limbs was wont,
And having learnt to swim in that sweet river,
Had often turned the art to some account.
A better swimmer you could scarce see ever,
He could perhaps have passed the Hellespont,
As once (a feat on which ourselves we prided)
Leander, Mr Ekenhead, and I did.

CVI

So here, though faint, emaciated, and stark,
He buoyed his boyish limbs and strove to ply
With the quick wave and gain, ere it was dark,
The beach which lay before him, high and dry.
The greatest danger here was from a shark,
That carried off his neighbour by the thigh.
As for the other two they could not swim,
So nobody arrived on shore but him.

THE HELLESPONT ✧ A narrow strait about 60Kms (40 miles) long and varying in width from just over a kilometre (3/4 mi) to more than six kilometres (4 mi). It was known, even in Byron's time, as the Dardanelles: named after Dardanus, the legendary king of Troy, which was located on it's Asian shore, the southern side of the strait.

FEAT. . . PRIDED ✧ On 3 May, 1810, on board a British naval frigate taking him to Constantinople, Byron — who was a strong swimmer — and Lieutenant Ekenhead swam from *Sestos*, on the European shore to *Abydos* on the Asian shore. On the same day B. wrote to his tutor at Harrow school, Henry Drury: "*. . . the immediate distance is not above a mile but the current renders it hazardous, so much so, that I doubt whether Leander's conjugal powers must not have been exhausted in his passage to Paradise.*". B. records this was his *second* attempt in a week; the first was defeated by strong currents.

Leander is a figure of legend: a young man from Abydos who fell in love with Hero, a priestess of Aphrodite — the Greek goddess of love — in the temple at Sestos. He would swim the Hellespont every evening to be with her, aiming for a lamp that she kept lit in a tower for him. But their summer of love came to an end when a storm hit the strait, blew out Hero's lamp, and Leander became lost and drowned. When Hero found his body washed up on the shore she killed herself by jumping out of the tower. B.'s grouping of the three names — the Lieutenant, himself and Leander — is a boast, of course, that all three are legendary figures.

CVII

Nor yet had he arrived but for the oar,
    Which providentially for him was washed
Just as his feeble arms could strike no more,
    And the hard wave o'erwhelmed him as'twas dashed
Within his grasp. He clung to it, and sore
    The waters beat while he thereto was lashed.
At last with swimming, wading, scrambling, he
Rolled on the beach, half senseless, from the sea.

CVIII

There breathless, with his digging nails he clung
    Fast to the sand, lest the returning wave,
From whose reluctant roar his life he wrung,
    Should suck him back to her insatiate grave.
And there he lay full length, where he was flung,
    Before the entrance of a cliff-worn cave,
With just enough of life to feel its pain
And deem that it was saved, perhaps in vain.

` *With slow and staggering effort…*

Rolled on the beach, half senseless ✒ Nicholas Régnier's 17th century depiction of Hero lamenting over the body of Leander, washed ashore (now in the National Gallery of Victoria). One of two models for Juan's translation from the squalid shipwreck to Haidée's arms is that of Leander's marathon crossings of the Hellespont to meet with Hero. Juan is not dead, of course, although his love affair with Haidée ends almost as badly, in Canto IV.

CIX

With slow and staggering effort he arose,
    But sunk again upon his bleeding knee
And quivering hand; and then he looked for those
    Who long had been his mates upon the sea,
But none of them appeared to share his woes,
    Save one, a corpse from out the famished three,
Who died two days before and now had found
An unknown barren beach for burial ground.

CX

And as he gazed, his dizzy brain spun fast
    And down he sunk, and as he sunk, the sand
Swam round and round, and all his senses passed.
    He fell upon his side, and his stretched hand
Drooped dripping on the oar (their jury mast),
    And like a withered lily, on the land
His slender frame and pallid aspect lay,
As fair a thing as e'er was formed of clay.

CXI

How long in his damp trance young Juan lay
    He knew not, for the earth was gone for him,
And time had nothing more of night nor day
    For his congealing blood and senses dim.
And how this heavy faintness passed away
    He knew not, till each painful pulse and limb
And tingling vein seemed throbbing back to life,
For Death, though vanquished, still retired with strife.

CXII

His eyes he opened, shut, again unclosed,
    For all was doubt and dizziness. He thought
He still was in the boat and had but dozed,
    And felt again with his despair o'erwrought,
And wished it death in which he had reposed,
    And then once more his feelings back were brought,
And slowly by his swimming eyes was seen
A lovely female face of Seventeen.

Seventeen ✧ Approximately Juan's age, at this point in the poem.

Literary models Byron had several the classical models for his story of Juan and Haidée. The closest is the story of Odysseus and Nausicaä in Book VI of Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus, who is attempting to return home from Troy, is held captive by the charms of Calypso on her island of Ogyia for seven years. He escapes on a raft but, by the enmity of the sea-god Poseidon, a storm overturns the raft and he swims ashore at a river estuary on the island of Schería (or Phaecia).

There, naked and exhausted he hides in some bushes and falls asleep. Nausciaä "of the beautiful robes", daughter the Phaecian king Alcinous, comes down to the river with her handmaids to wash their clothes. While waiting for the clothes to dry they are playing naked ball games when the ball flies into the bushes where Oddysseus is sleeping. He wakes and emerges, also naked and crusted with salt-spray; the handmaids fly but Nausicaä stays and Odysseus appeals for her help which, of course, she gives...

This same theme of the stranded sailor and the maiden on the beach occurs more than once in the Homeric epic. A second episode that also finds an echo in Cantos II and III of ***Don⚔Juan*** is the story of the Menelaus, King of Sparta who, stranded on his return journey from Troy, meets the nymph Eidothea on a beach. She helps him struggle with and overcome her father Proteus, an ancient shape-changing God (like Haidée's father, the mercurial Lambro), who provides Menelaus with important information for his onward journey.

The painting of Odysseus and Nausicaä is by the French caricaturist and artist, Jean Veber

CXIII

'T was bending close o'er his, and the small mouth
Seem'd almost prying into his for breath;
And chafing him, the soft warm hand of youth
Recall'd his answering spirits back from death;
And, bathing his chill temples, tried to soothe
Each pulse to animation, till beneath
Its gentle touch and trembling care, a sigh
To these kind efforts made a low reply.

CXIV

Then was the cordial poured, and mantle flung
Around his scarce-clad limbs; and the fair arm
Raised higher the faint head which o'er it hung.
And her transparent cheek, all pure and warm,
Pillowed his death-like forehead. Then she wrung
His dewy curls, long drenched by every storm,
And watched with eagerness each throb that drew
A sigh from his heaved bosom—and hers too.

AROUND HIS SCARCE-CLAD LIMBS "Juan and Haidée" was a favorite topic of Salon artists on both sides of the Channel in the last decades of the 19th century. Here, the image is from a painting by Alfred Roll, a student of later the impressionist painters including Bonnat, who adopted an academic style. He pictures Zoe as a negress.

CXV

And lifting him with care into the cave,
The gentle girl and her attendant—one
Young, yet her elder, and of brow less grave,
And more robust of figure—then begun
To kindle fire, and as the new flames gave
Light to the rocks that roofed them, which the sun
Had never seen, the maid or whatsoe'er
She was appeared distinct and tall and fair.

CXVI

Her brow was overhung with coins of gold,
That sparkled o'er the auburn of her hair,
Her clustering hair, whose longer locks were rolled
In braids behind, and though her stature were
Even of the highest for a female mould,
They nearly reached her heel. And in her air
There was a something which bespoke command,
As one who was a lady in the land.

CXVII

Her hair, I said, was auburn, but her eyes
    Were black as death, their lashes the same hue,
Of downcast length, in whose silk shadow lies
    Deepest attraction, for when to the view
Forth from its raven fringe the full glance flies,
    Ne'er with such force the swiftest arrow flew.
'Tis as the snake late coiled, who pours his length
And hurls at once his venom and his strength.

CXVIII

Her brow was white and low, her cheek's pure dye
    Like twilight rosy still with the set sun.
Short upper lip—sweet lips! that make us sigh
    Ever to have seen such; for she was one
Fit for the model of a statuary
    (A race of mere impostors, when all's done;
I've seen much finer women, ripe and real,
Than all the nonsense of their stone ideal).

CXIX

I'll tell you why I say so, for'tis just
    One should not rail without a decent cause.
There was *an Irish lady*, to whose bust
    I ne'er saw justice done, and yet she was
A frequent model; and if e'er she must
    Yield to stern Time and Nature's wrinkling laws,
They will destroy a face which mortal thought
Ne'er compassed, nor less mortal chisel wrought.

CXX

And such was she, the lady of the cave.
    Her dress was very different from the Spanish,
Simpler and yet of colours not so grave,
    For as you know, the Spanish women banish
Bright hues when out of doors, and yet, while wave
    Around them (what I hope will never vanish)
The basquina and the mantilla, they
Seem at the same time mystical and gay.

an Irish lady ✧ Apparently Lady Adelaide Forbes, a daughter of Thomas Moore's patron, whom in 1813 B. imagined he might court with a view to marriage (he was currently entangled in an affair with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh and half-earnestly trying to seduce Lady Frances Webster). He was much struck with her classical beauty that he later claimed — in Byronic gender-bending fashion — was identical to the Apollo Belvedere. Unfortunately, although B. says she was a "frequent model", I have been unable to find any of her portraits. She never married and died in 1858.

basquina ✧ A sort of dark "over-dress" that covered the indoor dress when going out.

CXXI

But with our damsel this was not the case;
Her dress was many-coloured, finely spun.
Her locks curled negligently round her face,
But through them gold and gems profusely shone.
Her girdle sparkled, and the richest lace
Flowed in her veil, and many a precious stone
Flashed on her little hand, but what was shocking,
Her small snow feet had slippers, but no stocking.

CXXII

The other female's dress was not unlike,
But of inferior materials. She
Had not so many ornaments to strike,
Her hair had silver only, bound to be
Her dowry, and her veil, in form alike,
Was coarser, and her air, though firm, less free.
Her hair was thicker, but less long, her eyes
As black, but quicker and of smaller size.

Her dress was many-coloured ❧ Ford Maddox Brown's many-coloured, pre-raphaelite-ish version of the scene. Haidée, standing outside the central lines of the image, seems rather more detatched than Byron describes her and the "beach" simply implausible. Brown was evidently more interested in decorative elements — costume, gesture — than in emotional realism.

` *And these two tended him. . .*

CXXIII

And these two tended him and cheered him both
With food and raiment and those soft attentions,
Which are (as I must own) of female growth,
And have ten thousand delicate inventions.
They made a most superior mess of broth,
A thing which poesy but seldom mentions,
But the best dish that e'er was cooked since Homer's
Achilles ordered dinner for newcomers.

Achilles ordered dinner ✧ In Book IX of *The Iliad*, Achilles offers dinner to a delegation comprising Odysseus, Ajax and Phoenix, sent by Agamemnon to convince Achilles to return to the battle. The Homeric dinner was not, however, *broth* but a baron of lamb, a fat goat and a chine of pork — the rich fatty cut across the shoulders — spit-roasted by Achilles and served with bread and wine.

CXXIV

I'll tell you who they were, this female pair,
Lest they should seem princesses in disguise.
Besides I hate all mystery and that air
Of claptrap, which your recent poets prize.
And so in short the girls they really were
They shall appear before your curious eyes,
Mistress and maid; the first was only daughter
Of an old man, who lived upon the water.

CXXV

A fisherman he had been in his youth,
And still a sort of fisherman was he.
But other speculations were, in sooth,
Added to his connexion with the sea,
Perhaps not so respectable, in truth.
A little smuggling and some piracy
Left him at last the sole of many masters
Of an ill-gotten million of piastres.

piastres ✧ A name for different pieces of currency: a low-value Turkish coin or a high-value Spanish one — at one point Spanish *pieces of eight*. Presumably, in Lambro's case, it refers to the latter.

CXXVI

A fisher therefore was he, though of men,
Like Peter the Apostle, and he fished
For wandering merchant vessels now and then
And sometimes caught as many as he wished.
The cargoes he confiscated, and gain
He sought in the slave market too and dished
Full many a morsel for that Turkish trade,
By which no doubt a good deal may be made.

Peter the Apostle ✧ In Matthew 4:19, Jesus says to the Gallilean fisherman Peter "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" Lambro is a pirate, however and "fishes" only for slaves.

CXXVII

He was a Greek, and on his isle had built
    (One of the wild and smaller Cyclades)
A very handsome house from out his guilt,
    And there he lived exceedingly at ease.
Heaven knows what cash he got or blood he spilt;
    A sad old fellow was he, if you please.
But this I know, it was a spacious building,
Full of barbaric carving, paint, and gilding.

CXXVIII

He had an only daughter, called Haidée,
    The greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles;
Besides, so very beautiful was she
    Her dowry was as nothing to her smiles.
Still in her teens, and like a lovely tree
    She grew to womanhood, and between whiles
Rejected several suitors, just to learn
How to accept a better in his turn.

CXXIX

And walking out upon the beach below
    The cliff, towards sunset, on that day she found,
Insensible, not dead, but nearly so,
    Don Juan, almost famished and half drowned.
But being naked, she was shocked, you know,
    Yet deemed herself in common pity bound,
As far as in her lay, 'to take him in,
A stranger' dying, with so white a skin.

CXXX

But taking him into her father's house
    Was not exactly the best way to save,
But like conveying to the cat the mouse,
    Or people in a trance into their grave,
Because the good old man had so much νους,
    Unlike the honest Arab thieves so brave,
He would have hospitably cured the stranger
And sold him instantly when out of danger.

Cyclades ✧ The geography of this Canto is, at best, fanciful. The Cyclades is a group of islands that, as their name suggests, surround (Ancient greek: κύκλος/kúklos meaning 'round about') the island of Delos in the Aegean Sea, south-east of the Greek peninsula. Hence, B. calls Haidée an "*heiress of the Eastern Isles*" in the next stanza. Since the Eastern end of the Mediterranean borders a region on the coast of Turkey the ancient Greeks called "Ionia" (spelled Ἰωνία), the region is called Ionian. B describes Haidée's accent as "Ionian" in stanza CXLIX. Also, in Canto III B. tells us that the island has "*Ionian elegance*".
Still, the Cyclades are an incredible distance for the shipwrecked sailors to have travelled (in an open boat, without sight of other ships) from the storm in the Gulf of Lion. Could B. mean some *other Ionia*? It turns out the term also refers to the islands of the *Ionian* sea (spelled Ιόνια) that lies to the *west* of the Greek peninsula. This is a slightly more plausible landing for the sole survivor of a shipwreck in the Western Mediterranean. Odysseus' home island of Ithaka is there, too. But Byron knew his Greek geography too well to mix up the two regions.

barbaric carving ✧ When B. gets around to describing Lambro's house in some detail in Canto III, there's lavish decoration but no sign of *barbarism*.

Haidée ✧ The name (Χαηδη in Greek) means "the caress" or "the caressed one". It first occurs in one of B.'s verses from 1811: *Translation of a Romaic Song*

> I enter thy garden of roses,
> Beloved and fair Haideé,
> Each morning where Flora reposes,
> For surely I see her in thee…

The folksong was transcribed for him by Marianna "Dudu" Roque, the daughter of a Hellenized French merchant at Athens who had befriended Byron and Hobhouse in 1810-11. B.'s manuscript of the translation is dated the day before he left Athens to return to London.

νους ✧ Nous: in english usage, shrewdness

CXXXI

And therefore with her maid she thought it best
(A virgin always on her maid relies)
To place him in the cave for present rest.
And when at last he opened his black eyes,
Their charity increased about their guest,
And their compassion grew to such a size
It opened half the turnpike gates to heaven
(St Paul says 'tis the toll which must be given).

St Paul says ✧ In his first epistle to the Corinthians (13, 1-13): "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing ... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity*."

Of course, B. does not mean that Haidée's *compassion* was growing, but another warm sentiment that opens more earthly gates...

CXXXII

They made a fire, but such a fire as they
Upon the moment could contrive with such
Materials as were cast up round the bay,
Some broken planks and oars, that to the touch
Were nearly tinder, since so long they lay;
A mast was almost crumbled to a crutch,
But by God's grace, here wrecks were in such plenty
That there was fuel to have furnished twenty.

CXXXIII

He had a bed of furs and a *pelisse*,
For Haidée stripped her sables off to make
His couch, and that he might be more at ease
And warm, in case by chance he should awake,
They also gave a petticoat apiece,
She and her maid, and promised by daybreak
To pay him a fresh visit with a dish
For breakfast of eggs, coffee, bread, and fish.

pelisse ✧ A fur-lined mantle or cloak.
Hmm... somehow *sables* doesn't seem quite in keeping with Haidée's other garments and stocking-less feet, described above.

CXXXIV

And thus they left him to his lone repose.
Juan slept like a top or like the dead,
Who sleep at last perhaps (God only knows),
Just for the present. And in his lulled head
Not even a vision of his former woes
Throbbed in accurséd dreams, which sometimes spread
Unwelcome visions of our former years,
Till the eye, cheated, opens thick with tears.

CXXXV

Young Juan slept all dreamless, but the maid,
Who smoothed his pillow as she left the den,
Looked back upon him and a moment stayed
And turned, believing that he called again.
He slumbered, yet she thought, at least she said
(The heart will slip even as the tongue and pen),
He had pronounced her name, but she forgot
That at this moment Juan knew it not.

CXXXVI

And pensive to her father's house she went,
Enjoining silence strict to Zoe, who
Better than her knew what in fact she meant,
She being wiser by a year or two.
A year or two's an age when rightly spent,
And Zoe spent hers, as most women do,
In gaining all that useful sort of knowledge
Which is acquired in Nature's good old college.

CXXXVII

The morn broke, and found Juan slumbering still
Fast in his cave, and nothing clashed upon
His rest. The rushing of the neighbouring rill
And the young beams of the excluded sun
Troubled him not, and he might sleep his fill.
And need he had of slumber yet, for none
Had suffered more; his hardships were comparative
To those related in my grand-dad's narrative.

my grand-dad's narrative ✧ *"A Narrative of the Honourable John Byron (Commander in a late expedition round the world)"*, Adm. John ('Foul-weather Jack') Byron's popular history — referenced above — of his experiences as a midshipman on the *Wager* when he was shipwrecked, marooned and imprisoned in Chile.

CXXXVIII

Not so Haidée; she sadly tossed and tumbled
And started from her sleep, and turning o'er,
Dreamed of a thousand wrecks, o'er which she stumbled,
And handsome corpses strewed upon the shore,
And woke her maid so early that she grumbled,
And called her father's old slaves up, who swore
In several oaths—Armenian, Turk, and Greek -
They knew not what to think of such a freak.

CXXXIX

But up she got and up she made them get,
With some pretence about the sun, that makes
Sweet skies just when he rises or is set.
And'tis no doubt a sight to see when breaks
Bright Phoebus while the mountains still are wet
With mist, and every bird with him awakes,
And night is flung off like a mourning suit
Worn for a husband, or some other brute.

Phoebus ✧ The name of the god Apollo as the sun god. In greek *phoibos*, lit. 'bright, shining'.

CXL

I say, the sun is a most glorious sight.
I've seen him rise full oft; indeed of late
I have sate up on purpose all the night,
Which hastens, as physicians say, one's fate.
And so all ye who would be in the right
In health and purse, begin your day to date
From daybreak, and when coffined at fourscore,
Engrave upon the plate, you rose at four.

CXLI

And Haidée met the morning face to face.
Her own was freshest, though a feverish flush
Had dyed it with the headlong blood, whose race
From heart to cheek is curbed into a blush,
Like to a torrent which a mountain's base,
That overpowers some alpine river's rush,
Checks to a lake, whose waves in circles spread;
Or the Red Sea—but the sea is not red.

the sea is not red ✧ No…it's an ordinary blue color. At one level, this note is just B.'s comic deflation of an elaborate simile ('Like to a torrent…') in a form used by classical authors that sounds rather stilted in modern English. But it recalls a mystery about the name of this large gulf separating Asia and Africa that was remarked by the Greek geographer Strabo as early as the 1st Century C.E. Strabo mentions speculations about the name being due to the refraction of the sun's light, or reflections of the color of the surrounding landscape or the color of corals in the shallows. These days there are suggestions, too, that it might be due to the color of an algal bloom at the northern end of the sea. But ***IA*** offers the most convincing explanation of all. He speculates that the ancient Jews called it the "Sea of Edom", referring to the ancient land of Edom that lay across the Jordan valley between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba (or Gulf of Eilat) that is the north-eastern tip of the Red Sea. The word *Edom* means *Red* in Hebrew, a reference to the reddish soil of the Edomite mountains or possibly to Edom's founder Esau — Jacob's older brother — who is described (Genesis 25:25) as "…red, all over like a hairy garment;". Asimov believes the Greek-speaking Jews who first translated Genesis simply translated the name of the sea.

CXLII

And down the cliff the island virgin came,
And near the cave her quick light footsteps drew,
While the sun smiled on her with his first flame,
And young Aurora kissed her lips with dew,
Taking her for a sister. Just the same
Mistake you would have made on seeing the two,
Although the mortal, quite as fresh and fair,
Had all the advantage too of not being air.

Aurora ✧ The goddess of Dawn.

CXLIII

And when into the cavern Haidée stepped
All timidly, yet rapidly, she saw
That like an infant Juan sweetly slept.
And then she stopped and stood as if in awe
(For sleep is awful) and on tiptoe crept
And wrapt him closer, lest the air, too raw,
Should reach his blood, then o'er him still as death
Bent, with hushed lips, that drank his scarce drawn breath.

CXLIV

And thus like to an angel o'er the dying
Who die in righteousness she leaned; and there
All tranquilly the shipwrecked boy was lying,
As o'er him lay the calm and stirless air.
But Zoe the meantime some eggs was frying,
Since, after all, no doubt the youthful pair
Must breakfast; and betimes, lest they should ask it,
She drew out her provision from the basket.

An angel o'er the dying ✧ If this image seems familiar to us it may be from the use of weeping or guardian angels as funeral sculptures: an iconography that belongs mostly to the late 19th century. B.'s readers would have recognized the idea of an angel as *psychopomp*, conducting the righteous to heaven which appears here and there in scriptures e.g. Luke 16:22 where the dying Lazarus is carried by angels to "the bosom of Abraham". A similar image appears in Norse mythology, too, of the Valkyrie bringing dead warriors to Valhalla. But his image of an angel cradling the dying may originate with Byron. The christian tradition of "guardian angels" was elevated to an article of faith (possibly by the Jesuits) in the 16th century. But they were militant guardians of the living. Then Juan is not dying or in much danger of dying: hence B.'s delight in contrasting this pious image with that of Zoe frying eggs for breakfast. Later, in Stanza CCIV, B. depicts both Juan and Haidée as angels in each others' eyes.

CXLV

She knew that the best feelings must have victual,
And that a shipwrecked youth would hungry be.
Besides, being less in love, she yawned a little
And felt her veins chilled by the neighbouring sea.
And so she cooked their breakfast to a tittle;
I can't say that she gave them any tea,
But there were eggs, fruit, coffee, bread, fish, honey,
With Scio wine, and all for love, not money.

Scio ✧ The Greek island of Khios (Chios). Located off the West Coast of Turkey, said to be the birthplace of Homer and renowned once for its wine. Apparently Lambro kept Chian wine in his cellar because in Canto III we find drunken guests at a banquet at his house helping themselves liberally to this same wine.

CXLVI

And Zoe, when the eggs were ready and
The coffee made, would fain have wakened Juan,
But Haidée stopped her with her quick small hand,
And without word, a sign her finger drew on
Her lip, which Zoe needs must understand,
And the first breakfast spoilt, prepared a new one,
Because her mistress would not let her break
That sleep which seemed as it would ne'er awake.

CXLVII

For still he lay, and on his thin worn cheek
A purple hectic played like dying day
On the snow-tops of distant hills. The streak
Of sufferance yet upon his forehead lay,
Where the blue veins looked shadowy, shrunk, and weak;
And his black curls were dewy with the spray,
Which weighed upon them yet, all damp and salt,
Mixed with the stony vapours of the vault.

hectic ✧ A "hectic fever" is fever of consumption or other wasting diseases. Here, a "*purple hectic*" can be taken as simply the flush of such a fever.

CXLVIII

And she bent o'er him, and he lay beneath,
Hushed as the babe upon its mother's breast,
Drooped as the willow when no winds can breathe,
Lulled like the depth of ocean when at rest,
Fair as the crowning rose of the whole wreath,
Soft as the callow cygnet in its nest.
In short he was a very pretty fellow,
Although his woes had turned him rather yellow.

CXLIX

He woke and gazed and would have slept again,
But the fair face which met his eyes forbade
Those eyes to close, though weariness and pain
Had further sleep a further pleasure made;
For woman's face was never formed in vain
For Juan, so that even when he prayed
He turned from grisly saints and martyrs hairy
To the sweet portraits of the Virgin Mary.

CL

And thus upon his elbow he arose
And looked upon the lady, in whose cheek
The pale contended with the purple rose,
As with an effort she began to speak.
Her eyes were eloquent, her words would pose,
Although she told him in good modern Greek
With an Ionian accent, low and sweet,
That he was faint and must not talk, but eat.

CLI

Now Juan could not understand a word,
Being no Grecian, but he had an ear,
And her voice was the warble of a bird,
So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear
That finer, simpler music ne'er was heard,
The sort of sound we echo with a tear,
Without knowing why, an overpowering tone,
Whence melody descends as from a throne.

CLII

And Juan gazed as one who is awoke
By a distant organ, doubting if he be
Not yet a dreamer, till the spell is broke
By the watchman or some such reality,
Or by one's early valet's curséd knock.
At least it is a heavy sound to me,
Who like a morning slumber; for the night
Shows stars and women in a better light.

CLIII

And Juan too was helped out from his dream
Or sleep, or whatsoe'er it was, by feeling
A most prodigious appetite. The steam
Of Zoe's cookery no doubt was stealing
Upon his senses, and the kindling beam
Of the new fire, which Zoe kept up, kneeling
To stir her viands, made him quite awake
And long for food, but chiefly a beefsteak.

CLIV

But beef is rare within these oxless isles;
Goat's flesh there is, no doubt, and kid and mutton.
And when a holiday upon them smiles,
A joint upon their barbarous spits they put on.
But this occurs but seldom, between whiles,
For some of these are rocks with scarce a hut on;
Others are fair and fertile, among which
This, though not large, was one of the most rich.

fable of the Minotaur In this stanza and the next, B. makes a slightly obscure joke about the aggressive martial character of beef-eaters such as, pre-eminently, the British. He suggests that the story of Pasiphæ, the wife of Minos, King of Crete, who had a 'machine' built to allow her to have sex with a bull was not — as you might suppose — just a tale of perverse lust with monstrous results (the Minotaur: the half-man, half-bull, all bad). Instead, B. proposes, it's really a fable about cattle breeding: an art whose practice would add more beef to the Greek diet and improve their successes in war. Modern archeological research showed B. was sort-of-right about the Pasiphæ tale being a ritual myth related to fertility. Not bovine fertility, however. The image is from (another) painting by Alfred Roll entitled "Femme et taureau".

CLV

I say that beef is rare, and can't help thinking
That the old fable of the Minotaur
From which our modern morals, rightly shrinking,
Condemn the royal lady's taste who wore
A cow's shape for a mask—was only (sinking
The allegory) a mere type, no more,
That Pasiphæpromoted breeding cattle,
To make the Cretans bloodier in battle.

CLVI

For we all know that English people are
Fed upon beef. I won't say much of beer,
Because'tis liquor only, and being far
From this my subject, has no business here.
We know too they are very fond of war,
A pleasure, like all pleasures, rather dear;
So were the Cretans, from which I infer
That beef and battles both were owing to her.

CLVII

But to resume. The languid Juan raised
His head upon his elbow and he saw
A sight on which he had not lately gazed,
As all his latter meals had been quite raw,
Three or four things, for which the Lord he praised,
And feeling still the famished vulture gnaw,
He fell upon whate'er was offered, like
A priest, a shark, an alderman, or pike.

PRIEST. . . PIKE ✧ Conventional images of greed and gluttony. Aldermen were Justices of the Peace who levied civil fines and so were unpopular. A pike is a species of large, predatory fish with a big, toothy, mouth.

CLVIII

He ate, and he was well supplied, and she,
Who watched him like a mother, would have fed
Him past all bounds, because she smiled to see
Such appetite in one she had deemed dead.
But Zoe, being older than Haidée,
Knew (by tradition, for she ne'er had read)
That famished people must be slowly nurst
And fed by spoonfuls, else they always burst.

CLIX

And so she took the liberty to state,
    Rather by deeds than words, because the case
Was urgent, that the gentleman whose fate
    Had made her mistress quit her bed to trace
The seashore at this hour must leave his plate,
    Unless he wished to die upon the place.
She snatched it and refused another morsel,
Saying, he had gorged enough to make a horse ill.

she took the liberty to state ✧ Another scolding servant, like Julia's maid, Antonia, in Canto I.

CLX

Next they—he being naked, save a tattered
    Pair of scarce decent trousers—went to work
And in the fire his recent rags they scattered,
    And dressed him, for the present, like a Turk
Or Greek; that is, although it not much mattered,
    Omitting turban, slippers, pistols, dirk,
They furnished him, entire except some stitches,
With a clean shirt and very spacious breeches.

a clean shirt and very spacious breeches ✧ Presumably, Lambro's. Juan is several times dressed by his girlfriends; here, in Canto V by the Sultana Gulbeyaz — where he is dressed as a woman — and in Canto IX by the Empress Catherine.

CLXI

And then fair Haidée tried her tongue at speaking,
    But not a word could Juan comprehend,
Although he listened so that the young Greek in
    Her earnestness would ne'er have made an end,
And as he interrupted not, went eking
    Her speech out to her protégé and friend,
Till pausing at the last her breath to take,
She saw he did not understand Romaic.

Romaic ✧ Vernacular, modern Greek.

CLXII

And then she had recourse to nods and signs
    And smiles and sparkles of the speaking eye,
And read (the only book she could) the lines
    Of his fair face and found, by sympathy,
The answer eloquent, where the soul shines
    And darts in one quick glance a long reply;
And thus in every look she saw expres't
A world of words, and things at which she guessed.

CLXIII

And now by dint of fingers and of eyes
    And words repeated after her, he took
A lesson in her tongue, but by surmise
    No doubt less of her language than her look.
As he who studies fervently the skies
    Turns oftener to the stars than to his book,
Thus Juan learned his alpha beta better
From Haidée's glance than any graven letter.

CLXIV

'Tis pleasing to be schooled in a strange tongue
    By female lips and eyes, that is, I mean,
When both the teacher and the taught are young,
    As was the case at least where I have been.
They smile so when one's right, and when one's wrong
    They smile still more, and then there intervene
Pressure of hands, perhaps even a chaste kiss.
I learned the little that I know by this;

CLXV

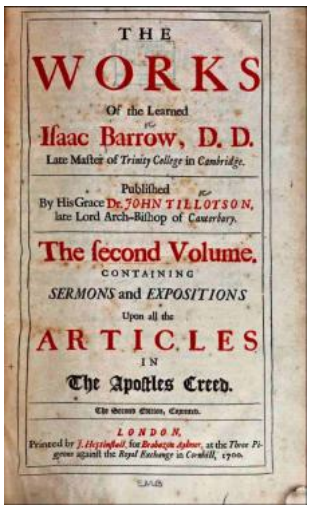
That is, some words of Spanish, Turk, and Greek,
    Italian not at all, having no teachers.
Much English I cannot pretend to speak,
    Learning that language chiefly from its preachers,
Barrow, South, Tillotson, whom every week
    I study, also Blair, the highest reachers
Of eloquence in piety and prose.
I hate your poets, so read none of those.

CLXVI

As for the ladies, I have nought to say,
    A wanderer from the British world of fashion,
Where I, like other 'dogs, have had my day',
    Like other men too, may have had my passion,
But that, like other things, has passed away,
    And all her fools whom I could lay the lash on,
Foes, friends, men, women, now are nought to me
But dreams of what has been, no more to be.

SCHOOLED IN A STRANGE TONGUE ✧ In his biography of B. Thos. Moore claims B. learned Spanish like this, also Greek from Teresa Macri in Athens and Italian from his several girlfriends in Venice including Maria Segrati — whose Italian must have been a lively vernacular.

THE LITTLE THAT I KNOW ✧ Irony. As ***PC*** notes, B. "was competent-to-fluent in Spanish, Italian, French, Latin, ancient and Modern Greek, Turkish, and perhaps Armenian and Arabic: German was the only language for which he affected disdain."


THE
WORKS
Of the Learned
Isaac Barrow, D. D.
Late Master of Trinity College in Cambridge.
Published
By His Grace Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,
late Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury.
The second Volume.
CONTAINING
SERMONS and EXPOSITIONS
Upon all the
ARTICLES
IN
The Apostles Creed.
LONDON,

BARROW. . . BLAIR ✒ Divines whose sermons B. had probably read, himself. Isaac Barrow was a remarkable man of learning, wit and a traveller in the East. He was the first Lucasian professor of Mathematics at Cambridge who resigned his Chair in favour of his student, Isaac Newton. John Tillotson was Archbishop of Canterbury; he published Barrow's religious works as well as his own sermons. South was a 17th century up-holder of the divine right of kings. Blair was a Scot and a Presbyterian who published his *Lectures on Rhetoric* in 1783.

DOGS, HAVE HAD MY DAY ✧ ***IA*** points out that this long proverbial phrase may be, here, a quote from Alexander Pope's translation of *The Odyssey*. When finally Odysseus confronts his wife's suitors in his home he shouts "You yellow dogs, you thought I'd never make it home from the land of Troy" (*tr. Fitzgerald*). Pope translates this as "*Dogs, ye have had your day.*" B., too, had had *his* day in the limelight, waking one morning in 1812, as he said, to find himself famous as the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. He was lionized in Regency salons by women of rank and beauty. He was introduced to the Regent. But he lost his wealth and reputation — although scarcely ever his *fame* — though his own extraordinary folly in the next four years.

CLXVII

Return we to Don Juan. He begun
To hear new words and to repeat them; but
Some feelings, universal as the sun,
Were such as could not in his breast be shut
More than within the bosom of a nun.
He was in love, as you would be no doubt,
With a young benefactress; so was she,
Just in the way we very often see.

CLXVIII

And every day by daybreak, rather early
For Juan, who was somewhat fond of rest,
She came into the cave, but it was merely
To see her bird reposing in his nest.
And she would softly stir his locks so curly,
Without disturbing her yet slumbering guest,
Breathing all gently o'er his cheek and mouth,
As o'er a bed of roses the sweet south.

CLXIX

And every morn his colour freshlier came,
And every day helped on his convalescence.
'Twas well, because health in the human frame
Is pleasant, besides being true love's essence,
For health and idleness to passion's flame
Are oil and gunpowder; and some good lessons
Are also learnt from Ceres and from Bacchus,
Without whom Venus will not long attack us.

from Ceres and from Bacchus ✧ The Roman goddess of agriculture, *esp*. grain, and the Greek god of wine. B. is echoing the Roman playwright Terence ("*Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus is frigid*" — from *The Eunuch*) here. He does so again in Canto XVI.

CLXX

While Venus fills the heart (without heart really
Love, though good always, is not quite so good),
Ceres presents a plate of vermicelli
(For love must be sustained like flesh and blood),
While Bacchus pours out wine or hands a jelly.
Eggs, oysters too, are amatory food,
But who is their purveyor from above
Heaven knows; it may be Neptune, Pan, or Jove.

amatory food ✧ As reputed aphrodisiacs? Neptune, God of the Sea and Pan, God of Nature and fertility are possible purveyors of oysters at least.

CLXXI

When Juan woke he found some good things ready,
A bath, a breakfast, and the finest eyes
That ever made a youthful heart less steady,
Besides her maid's, as pretty for their size;
But I have spoken of all this already,
And repetition's tiresome and unwise.
Well, Juan, after bathing in the sea,
Came always back to coffee and Haidée.

CLXXII

Both were so young and one so innocent
That bathing passed for nothing. Juan seemed
To her, as'twere, the kind of being sent,
Of whom these two years she had nightly dreamed,
A something to be loved, a creature meant
To be her happiness, and whom she deemed
To render happy. All who joy would win
Must share it; Happiness was born a twin.

CLXXIII

It was such pleasure to behold him, such
Enlargement of existence to partake
Nature with him, to thrill beneath his touch,
To watch him slumbering and to see him wake.
To live with him forever were too much,
But then the thought of parting made her quake.
He was her own, her ocean-treasure, cast
Like a rich wreck, her first love and her last.

CLXXIV

And thus a moon rolled on, and fair Haidée
Paid daily visits to her boy and took
Such plentiful precautions that still he
Remained unknown within his craggy nook.
At last her father's prows put out to sea,
For certain merchantmen upon the look,
Not as of yore to carry off an Io,
But three Ragusan vessels bound for Scio.

to carry off an Io ✧ Io was a river nymph that Zeus dallied with and whom he turned into a heifer (more bull myths) to hide her from his jealous wife, Hera. Hera found her out, however, and sent a gadfly to torment her. She fled, but was not "carried off".

Ragusan vessels ✧ Ragusa is Dubrovnik, the historic port of Croatia, not the city in Sicily. Scio we saw above

CLXXV

Then came her freedom, for she had no mother,
So that, her father being at sea, she was
Free as a married woman, or such other
Female, as where she likes may freely pass,
Without even the encumbrance of a brother,
The freest she that ever gazed on glass.
I speak of Christian lands in this comparison,
Where wives, at least, are seldom kept in garrison.

she had no mother ✧ We learn in Canto IV that "*Her mother was a Moorish maid from Fez*", in Morocco. Presumably a captive of Lambro's who bequeathed her daughter beauty and passion and those "dark eyes" that B. mentions so often in his description of Juan's lovers (see also Julia's heritage).

CLXXVI

Now she prolonged her visits and her talk
(For they must talk), and he had learnt to say
So much as to propose to take a walk,
For little had he wandered since the day
On which, like a young flower snapped from the stalk,
Drooping and dewy on the beach he lay,
And thus they walked out in the afternoon
And saw the sun set opposite the moon.

the sun set opposite the moon ✧ That is, on an evening of a full moon. This lunar setting echoes the seduction scene in Canto I.

CLXXVII

It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
With cliffs above and a broad sandy shore,
Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host,
With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-tost.
And rarely ceased the haughty billow's roar,
Save on the dead long summer days, which make
The outstretched ocean glitter like a lake.

CLXXVIII

And the small ripple spilt upon the beach
Scarcely o'erpassed the cream of your champagne,
When o'er the brim the sparkling bumpers reach,
That spring-dew of the spirit, the heart's rain!
Few things surpass old wine; and they may preach
Who please—the more because they preach in vain.
Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter,
Sermons and soda water the day after.

CLXXIX

Man being reasonable must get drunk;
The best of life is but intoxication.
Glory, the grape, love, gold, in these are sunk
The hopes of all men and of every nation;
Without their sap, how branchless were the trunk
Of life's strange tree, so fruitful on occasion.
But to return. Get very drunk, and when
You wake with headache, you shall see what then.

CLXXX

Ring for your valet, bid him quickly bring
Some hock and soda water. Then you'll know
A pleasure worthy Xerxes, the great king;
For not the blest sherbet, sublimed with snow,
Nor the first sparkle of the desert spring,
Nor Burgundy in all its sunset glow,
After long travel, ennui, love, or slaughter,
Vie with that draught of hock and soda water.

hock ✧ Hock is a, strictly, a Hockheimer wine from the Rheingau region of Germany. But in 18th Century Britain it referred to any white, riesling-style German wine. B. frequently praises "Hock and soda-water" as a sovereign cure for (the dehydration of) hangovers.

Xerxes, the great king ✧ Xerxes, King of Persia for five decades around the turn of the 5th Century BCE twice invaded the Greek peninsula, but was frustrated by the Spartans at Thermopylae and defeated by the Athenians at Salamis and Plataea. After that he withdrew to his Asian lands where, (Athenian) scandal said, he luxuriated to the extent of running out of amusements so that he offered a reward to anyone who could invent him a new pleasure. B. has already mentioned this same story in Canto I.

CLXXXI

The coast—I think it was the coast that I
Was just describing—yes, it was the coast -
Lay at this period quiet as the sky,
The sands untumbled, the blue waves untost,
And all was stillness, save the sea bird's cry
And dolphin's leap and little billow crost
By some low rock or shelve, that made it fret
Against the boundary it scarcely wet.

CLXXXII

And forth they wandered, her sire being gone,
As I have said, upon an expedition.
And mother, brother, guardian, she had none,
Save Zoe, who although with due precision
She waited on her lady with the sun,
Thought daily service was her only mission,
Bringing warm water, wreathing her long tresses,
And asking now and then for cast-off dresses.

As I have said ✧ B. repeats himself and accumulate details — such as the time of day, the date, the condition of the skies — as a delaying rhetorical device that is prologue to some climax. Again, this echoes the build-up to the seduction scene in Canto I.

CLXXXIII

It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded
Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,
Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded,
Circling all nature, hushed and dim and still,
With the far mountain-crescent half surrounded
On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill
Upon the other, and the rosy sky
With one star sparkling through it like an eye.

CLXXXIV

And thus they wandered forth, and hand in hand,
Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
Glided along the smooth and hardened sand,
And in the worn and wild receptacles
Worked by the storms, yet worked as it were planned,
In hollow halls with sparry roofs and cells,
They turned to rest, and each clasped by an arm,
Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

SPARRY ROOFS ✧ That is, roofs hung with stalactites. The adjective, from the noun 'spar', is no longer in common use.

CLXXXV

They looked up to the sky, whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright.
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight.
They heard the wave's splash and the wind so low,
And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other, and beholding this,
Their lips drew near and clung into a kiss,

CLXXXVI

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth and love
And beauty, all concentrating like rays
Into one focus, kindled from above;
Such kisses as belong to early days,
Where heart and soul and sense in concert move,
And the blood's lava, and the pulse a blaze,
Each kiss a heart-quake, for a kiss's strength,
I think, it must be reckoned by its length.

CLXXXVII

By length I mean duration; theirs endured
    Heaven knows how long; no doubt they never reckoned,
And if they had, they could not have secured
    The sum of their sensations to a second.
They had not spoken, but they felt allured,
    As if their souls and lips each other beckoned,
Which, being joined, like swarming bees they clung,
Their hearts the flowers from whence the honey sprung.

CLXXXVIII

They were alone, but not alone as they
    Who shut in chambers think it loneliness.
The silent ocean and the starlight bay,
    The twilight glow, which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands and dropping caves, that lay
    Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.

CLXXXIX

They feared no eyes nor ears on that lone beach,
    They felt no terrors from the night, they were
All in all to each other. Though their speech
    Was broken words, they thought a language there,
And all the burning tongues the passions teach
    Found in one sigh the best interpreter
Of nature's oracle, first love, that all
Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.

CXC

Haidée spoke not of scruples, asked no vows
    Nor offered any; she had never heard
Of plight and promises to be a spouse,
    Or perils by a loving maid incurred.
She was all which pure ignorance allows
    And flew to her young mate like a young bird,
And never having dreamt of falsehood, she
Had not one word to say of constancy.

CXCI

She loved and was beloved, she adored
And she was worshipped after nature's fashion.
Their intense souls, into each other poured,
If souls could die, had perished in that passion,
But by degrees their senses were restored,
Again to be o'ercome, again to dash on.
And beating' gainst his bosom, Haidée's heart
Felt as if never more to beat apart.

CXCII

Alas, they were so young, so beautiful,
So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
Was that in which the heart is always full,
And having o'er itself no further power,
Prompts deeds eternity cannot annul,
But pays off moments in an endless shower
Of hell-fire, all prepared for people giving
Pleasure or pain to one another living.

CXCIII

Alas for Juan and Haidée! They were
So loving and so lovely; till then never,
Excepting our first parents, such a pair
Had run the risk of being damned forever.
And Haidée, being devout as well as fair,
Had doubtless heard about the Stygian river
And hell and purgatory, but forgot
Just in the very crisis she should not.

CXCIV

They look upon each other, and their eyes
Gleam in the moonlight, and her white arm clasps
Round Juan's head, and his around hers lies
Half buried in the tresses which it grasps.
She sits upon his knee and drinks his sighs,
He hers, until they end in broken gasps;
And thus they form a group that's quite antique,
Half naked, loving, natural, and Greek.

A GROUP THAT'S QUITE ANTIQUE This couplet is *almost* proverbial. There is little in Classical Greek literature that celebrates sexual license, but in the Greek Revival of late 18th century European architecture, art and fashion, "greekness" was associated with "naturalness" and sexual liberty. The *Directoire* style of womens' fashion, in particular, mimicked the loose, diaphanous gowns of Hellenistic statuary. When the prominent hostess Mme Tallien — briefly Napoleon's mistress, above in a portrait by Duvivier (1806) — appeared at the Opera wearing a white silk gown without sleeves or underwear, Talleyrand remarked "One could not be more sumptuously unclothed!". Pauline Bonaparte, Napoleon's younger sister, was represented naked as Venus Victrix in greek undress, by the sculptor Cannova

CXCV

And when those deep and burning moments passed,
And Juan sunk to sleep within her arms,
She slept not, but all tenderly, though fast,
Sustained his head upon her bosom's charms.
And now and then her eye to heaven is cast,
And then on the pale cheek her breast now warms,
Pillowed on her o'erflowing heart, which pants
With all it granted and with all it grants.

CXCVI

An infant when it gazes on a light,
A child the moment when it drains the breast,
A devotee when soars the Host in sight,
An Arab with a stranger for a guest,
A sailor when the prize has struck in fight,
A miser filling his most hoarded chest
Feel rapture, but not such true joy are reaping
As they who watch o'er what they love while sleeping.

when soars the Host in sight ✧ The communion bread, elevated in the Mass after consecration. B. is enjoying himself by mixing the sacred, the profane and the perverse in this bunch of metaphors, even at the risk of rather spoiling the mood.

when the prize has struck ✧ The vanquished ship would "strike" or lower its topsail, de-powering the vessel, when it surrendered.

CXCVII

For there it lies so tranquil, so beloved;
All that it hath of life with us is living,
So gentle, stirless, helpless, and unmoved,
And all unconscious of the joy'tis giving.
All it hath felt, inflicted, passed, and proved,
Hushed into depths beyond the watcher's diving,
There lies the thing we love with all its errors
And all its charms, like death without its terrors.

CXCVIII

The lady watched her lover; and that hour
Of love's and night's and ocean's solitude
O'erflowed her soul with their united power.
Amidst the barren sand and rocks so rude
She and her wave-worn love had made their bower,
Where nought upon their passion could intrude,
And all the stars that crowded the blue space
Saw nothing happier than her glowing face.

the lady watched her lover ✒ It is typical of ***Don⚔Juan*** that the emotion of the scene is conveyed through Haidée's experience, expression and thoughts rather than through Juan's. Our hero is a bit of a blank page throughout the poem; often little more than a clothes-hanger and sometimes few even of those. This painting, in an *overdressed* bourgeois-romantic style is by Marcel Saunier (Paris), 1839.

CXCIX

Alas, the love of women! It is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing,
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring
To them but mockeries of the past alone,
And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
Deadly and quick and crushing; yet as real
Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel.

CC

They are right, for man, to man so oft unjust,
Is always so to women. One sole bond
Awaits them, treachery is all their trust.
Taught to conceal, their bursting hearts despond
Over their idol, till some wealthier lust
Buys them in marriage—and what rests beyond?
A thankless husband, next a faithless lover,
Then dressing, nursing, praying, and all's over.

CCI

Some take a lover, some take drams or prayers,
Some mind their household, others dissipation,
Some run away and but exchange their cares,
Losing the advantage of a virtuous station.
Few changes e'er can better their affairs,
Theirs being an unnatural situation,
From the dull palace to the dirty hovel.
Some play the devil, and then write a novel.

write a novel ✧ As B.'s lover Lady Caroline Lamb did, anonymously: *Glenarvon* was her more-or-less incoherent 1816 *roman à clef* about her torrid affair with Byron in 1812-1813.

CCII

Haidée was Nature's bride and knew not this;
Haidée was Passion's child, born where the sun
Showers triple light and scorches even the kiss
Of his gazelle-eyed daughters. She was one
Made but to love, to feel that she was his
Who was her chosen. What was said or done
Elsewhere was nothing. She had nought to fear,
Hope, care, nor love beyond; her heart beat here.

CCIII

And oh, that quickening of the heart, that beat!
    How much it costs us! Yet each rising throb
Is in its cause as its effect so sweet
    That Wisdom, ever on the watch to rob
Joy of its alchemy and to repeat
    Fine truths—even Conscience too—has a tough job
To make us understand each good old maxim,
So good I wonder Castlereagh don't tax'em.

CCIV

And now'twas done; on the lone shore were plighted
    Their hearts. The stars, their nuptial torches, shed
Beauty upon the beautiful they lighted.
    Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed,
By their own feelings hallowed and united;
    Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed.
And they were happy, for to their young eyes
Each was an angel, and earth Paradise.

Oh Love ✒ *A favorite trick. B uses an apostrophe to Love ("*Luurv*") many times in* **Don⚔Juan** *to launch into a sarcastic aside* apropos *of nothing much. For example in St.88 of Canto I "*Oh Love! in such as wilderness as this*...", or again in St.106 "*Oh Love! How perfect is thy mystic art*...", or in St.2 of Canto III, "*Oh Love! What is it in this world of ours*..." ... and in a dozen more places until, finally, in St.5 of Canto XV he feigns exhaustion: "*And as for love — O love! — We will proceed.*" **PC** notes that stanzas 205-207 were drafted on the back of a theatre program from Venice or Ravenna, but it is not clear what the drama was (B. doesn't seem to have been paying attention, in any case)*

` *Oh Love...*

THE CAVE THEIR BED ✒ The classical model for this beach-side romance is in Book IV of Virgil's *Anæid* where his Trojan-proto-Roman hero and Dido, Queen of Carthage, taking refuge from a storm in a cave, make love. Their affair, like Juan's and Haidée's, although stage-managed by Juno, goddess of marriage, leads eventually to tragedy when it conflicts with Anæas' destiny to found Rome. The image is from the *Virgilianus Romanus*, a 5th century manuscript of the *Æneid* in the Vatican Library

CCV

Oh Love, of whom great Cæsar was the suitor,
Titus the master, Antony the slave,
Horace, Catullus, scholars, Ovid tutor,
Sappho the sage bluestocking, in whose grave
All those may leap who rather would be neuter
(Leucadia's rock still overlooks the wave) -
Oh Love, thou art the very god of evil,
For after all, we cannot call thee devil.

Titus the master... ✧ Cæsar was *Cleopatra's* suitor. Titus, who became Emperor of Rome in 79 had, a decade earlier, been the general who destroyed Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. He brought back, as a mistress, Berenice, a princess of the Jewish royal family whom he is said to have truly loved. The Roman public disapproved of the liaison, however, and he sent Berenice home: thus *mastering* his love. Mark Anthony was *enslaved* by his infatuation with Cleopatra after Cæsar's assassination; forsaking Roman virtue for Eastern intrigue according to the popular scuttlebut. He quit the crucial naval battle of Actium (31 BCE) early to pursue his fleeing Queen and was killed on his return to Egypt by locals hoping to ingratiate themselves with Octavian, the victor at Actium.

Horace, Catullus, Ovid ✧ B. means the poets Horace and Catullus learn from love, although they mostly complain. Ovid — whose *Ars Amatoria* led to his exile by the moralizing Emperor Augustus — gave apparently straightforward advice for men on pick-up techniques, although it was also probably a satire on the louche habits of Roman males.

Sappho ✧ The poet of Lesbos and of lesbian love who, legend has it, leaped to her death from the cliffs of Cape Leucardia when rebuffed in love by Phaon, a boatman. Confused? So is the legend of Sappho's sexuality based on tiny scraps of remaining poetry. Still, it seems odd that B., who was bisexual, should describe Sapho's revealed preferences for both sexes as "neuter". Perhaps he is referring to the sexlessness of death. The brooding depiction here is by Charles Mengin (1877)

CCVI

Thou mak'st the chaste connubial state precarious
And jestest with the brows of mightiest men.
Cæsar and Pompey, Mahomet, Belisarius
Have much employed the Muse of history's pen.
Their lives and fortunes were extremely various;
Such worthies Time will never see again.
Yet to these four in three things the same luck holds;
They all were heroes, conquerors, and cuckolds.

Thou mak'st the chaste connubial state... ✧ These are famous men whose wives allegedly had sexual affairs outside their marriage; hence, by tradition, they wore '*horns on their brows*' (like the horned cap of a fool or jester). **Caesar** divorced his wife, Pompeia, in 62 BCE on the apparently flimsy grounds of suspicion — fanned by Caesar's mother — that a certain Publius Clodius had attended a females-only religious ceremony she hosted. There was nothing flimsy, however, about the reports that Caesar had betrayed his co-Triumvir **Pompey** by bedding the latter's wife, Mucia, in the same year. The Prophet of Islam, **Mohammed**, undertook many military campaigns on the Arabian peninsula. One morning, after a night-march, his favourite (*of four*) wives, Ayesha, who had been left behind, entered the camp in the company of a young man. Mohammed declared his faith in her innocence, based on divine revelation (Koran xxiv), but his enemies said otherwise. **Belisarius** was the leading general of Justinian's Eastern Roman Empire who had a remarkable record of victories in North Africa and Italy. His wife Antonina, a powerful woman allied to the empress Theodora, is said to have cuckolded him repeatedly including with his godson.

CCVII

Thou mak'st philosophers; there's Epicurus
And Aristippus, a material crew,
Who to immoral courses would allure us
By theories quite practicable too.
If only from the devil they would insure us,
How pleasant were the maxim (not quite new),
'Eat, drink, and love, what can the rest avail us?'
So said the royal sage Sardanapalus.

CCVIII

But Juan, had he quite forgotten Julia?
And should he have forgotten her so soon?
I can't but say it seems to me most truly a
Perplexing question, but no doubt the moon
Does these things for us, and whenever newly a
Strong palpitation rises,'tis her boon,
Else how the devil is it that fresh features
Have such a charm for us poor human creatures?

CCIX

I hate inconstancy; I loathe, detest,
Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made
Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast
No permanent foundation can be laid.
Love, constant love, has been my constant guest,
And yet last night, being at a masquerade,
I saw the prettiest creature, fresh from Milan,
Which gave me some sensations like a villain.

Thou mak'st philosophers... ✧ The Greek philosopher **Epicurus** held that true pleasure came from the enjoyment of good things in moderation, but his teaching was misconstrued by later commentators as and endorsement of luxury. An '*epicurean*' came to mean someone given to sensual gratification. **Aristippus**, a philosopher who lived nearly a century before Epicurus, held very similar views to him. Sardanapalus (Assurbanipal) was, according to the Greeks, an effeminate, luxuriating Assyrian king who indulged himself while his relm collapsed around him. Byron composed a verse-tragedy (*Sardanapaulus*) about him in 1821 portraying him as a transvestite who dies heroically.

I hate inconstancy ✧ Of course this protest is comically insincere, especially in light of the previous verse that somewhat explains and excuses "inconsistency" on Juan's part and the next that shows him ready to flirt and the following that excuse a 'wandering eye...'. Still, although promiscuous when young and a 'good hater', Byron was a rather faithful lover, a constant friend and a generous patron even to those whom, privately, he grew weary of, or quarrelled with. This is one of those instances of B. performing in 'byronic' mode that tends to obscure the differences between man and myth, perhaps even in his own mind.

being at a masquerade ✧ In the midst of drafting this Canto, B. was meanwhile happily debauching himself in the 1819 Carnivale of Venice.

Omitted verses... ✒ The fair copy of Canto II in Teresa Guiccicoli's hand contains two verses intended, probably, to appear at this point that were not included in Byron's own fair copy or, therefore, in the final print.

Shakespeare exclaims "Hang up Philosophy,
"Unless Philosophy can make a Juliet!" But
This is not the death that it should die –
For when the turbid Passions are unruly, it
No doubt can soothe them with a lullaby –
Last night I had another proof how truly it
Can calm, for what it "made" me on that same
Night was a "Juliet" even to the name. –

Juliet, or Giulietta – which last was
The real name of this fair Veronese,
O'er whose sad tale Love echoes still, Alas! –
And Youth still weeps the tender tears that please
Another Juliet – whom I would not pass,
Her tale is told with so much simple ease -
Is Rousseau's Julietta; I ne'er knew
One of the name but that I loved her too.

"*Hang up Philosophy...*" is from *Romeo and Juliet*, III.iii.56-7. "*Rousseau's Julietta*" is the heroine of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's epistolary novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Hélioïse* (1791) B. admired the book for its psychological insight.

CCX

But soon Philosophy came to my aid
And whispered, 'Think of every sacred tie!'
'I will, my dear Philosophy,' I said,
'But then her teeth, and then oh heaven, her eye!
I'll just inquire if she be wife or maid
Or neither—out of curiosity.'
'Stop!' cried Philosophy with air so Grecian
(Though she was masked then as a fair Venetian).

CCXI

'Stop!' So I stopped. But to return. That which
Men call inconstancy is nothing more
Than admiration due where Nature's rich
Profusion with young beauty covers o'er
Some favoured object; and as in the niche
A lovely statue we almost adore,
This sort of adoration of the real
Is but a heightening of the beau ideal.

So I stopped ✧ But B. did not stop, at least during 1818. If we are to believe his letter of 19 January 1819 to Hobhouse, he had at least twenty three lovers whom he names — including two mother-daughter pairs — during the Carnivale alone. He caught an STD from one.

CCXII

'Tis the perception of the beautiful,
A fine extension of the faculties,
Platonic, universal, wonderful,
Drawn from the stars and filtered through the skies,
Without which life would be extremely dull.
In short it is the use of our own eyes,
With one or two small senses added, just
To hint that flesh is formed of fiery dust.

nothing more than admiration ✧ The proposed resolution of the paradox that our author hates inconstancy but approves social and sexual adventure. It's not really "inconstancy" at all, but a consequence of admiration for 'ideal' beauty. Are you pursuaded?

CCXIII

Yet 'tis a painful feeling, and unwilling,
For surely if we always could perceive
In the same object graces quite as killing
As when she rose upon us like an Eve,
'Twould save us many a heartache, many a shilling
(For we must get them anyhow or grieve),
Whereas if one sole lady pleased forever,
How pleasant for the heart, as well as liver!

Teresa Gamba-Guiccioli ❦ Guiseppe Fangnani's 1859 portrait of an older, still beautiful Teresa. Byron had fallen out of love with her but he remained loyal; "constant" to the last if we don't count his final, rather hopeless, un-requited infatuation with a young Greek, Lukas Chalandritsanos

CCXIV

The heart is like the sky, a part of heaven,
But changes night and day too, like the sky.
Now o'er it clouds and thunder must be driven,
And darkness and destruction as on high,
But when it hath been scorched and pierced and riven,
Its storms expire in water drops. The eye
Pours forth at last the heart's blood turned to tears,
Which make the English climate of our years.

CCXV

The liver is the lazaret of bile,
    But very rarely executes its function,
For the first passion stays there such a while
    That all the rest creep in and form a junction,
Like knots of vipers on a dunghill's soil -
    Rage, fear, hate, jealousy, revenge, compunction -
So that all mischiefs spring up from this entrail,
Like earthquakes from the hidden fire called 'central'.

THE LAZARET OF BILE ✧ A *lazaretto* is a quarantine hospital for infectious diseases. B. means that the liver is meant to protect the rest of the system from corrosive effects of 'bile' or frustration and anger.

THE HIDDEN FIRE CALLED 'CENTRAL' ✧ Some thought that earthquakes originated in outbursts of energy from the fiery core of the planet.

CCXVI

In the meantime, without proceeding more
    In this anatomy, I've finished now
Two hundred and odd stanzas as before,
    That being about the number I'll allow
Each canto of the twelve or twenty-four;
    And laying down my pen, I make my bow,
Leaving Don Juan and Haidée to plead
For them and theirs with all who deign to read.

TWO HUNDRED AND ODD STANZAS ✧ Most of the later Cantos were little more than half the length of this.

Canto III

The Betrothal Canto III develops the idyll of Juan and Haidée, at liberty on their Aegean isle and unaware of the approach of Haidée's father, the pirate Lambro. Juan and Haidée hold a rich "wedding" feast at which a poet sings an ironic lament for the lost freedom of Greece under Ottoman rule. The happy day lengthens into evening. (This image is, of course, Ai generated.)

Some selections from Canto III

Love vs. marriage: the idyll of Juan and Haidée set against Petrarch's love for Laura	*Marriage from Love, like vinegar from wine — / A sad, sour, sober beverage.*	IV–X
Lambro approaches: heads home by the far shore; hilltop vigil above his own feast; doubts on the wisdom of returning husbands; the cavalier servente digression	*'T is said their last parting was pathetic, / As partings often are, or ought to be.*	XVIII–XXV
Lambro descends: sees his white walls; hears "an unhallowed, earthly sound of fiddling"; Pyrrhic dance in the garden; the feast — pilaus, Samian and Chian wine	*He heard 'an unhallowed, earthly sound of fiddling.'*	XXVI–XXXV
The vinous Greek: Lambro questions the drunken guests; learns his house has a new "master"; Lambro's patient fury	*A second hiccuped, 'Our old Master's dead, / You'd better ask our Mistress who's his heir.'*	XLI–XLVII
The Isles of Greece sung by the Poet; Sappho and Homer's birthplaces; Marathon, Salamis, Thermopylae; a call to enslaved Greece to honour its ancestors	*The mountains look on Marathon — / And Marathon looks on the sea*	LXXXVII
Attack on the Lake Poets; Pantisocracy; Wordsworth's drowsy *Excursion*;	*Oh! ye shades / Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?*	XCIII–CI
Return and the "Ave Maria": feast over, lovers left alone at twilight ; three-stanza pantheistic hymn; Ravenna's pine forest and Boccaccio's lay; Sappho's Hesperus fragment imitated; Dante's Purgatorio VIII imitated	*Ave Maria! o'er the earth and sea, / That heavenliest hour of Heaven is worthiest thee!*	CII–CIX

I

HAIL, Muse! *et cetera.*—We left Juan sleeping,
Pillowed upon a fair and happy breast,
And watched by eyes that never yet knew weeping,
And loved by a young heart, too deeply blest
To feel the poison through her spirit creeping,
Or know who rested there, a foe to rest,
Had soiled the current of her sinless years,
And turned her pure heart's purest blood to tears!

We left Juan. . . ✧ Byron's first draft of Canto III, before he split it into two Cantos, began with a nine-verse attack on Wellington; later moved to Canto IX. This verse, in that earlier draft, began: "Now to my Epic. . . "

A foe to rest ✧ The *'foe to rest'* is Love (capitalized and addressed in the next stanza), not to Juan. that rests in her heart and has "*soiled the current of [Haidee's] sinless years*. . . ". In the manuscript, Byron used a semi-colon before "A foe" that some editors have turned into a period and others into a comma (as it appears here).

Hail Muse! etc. ✒ Epics, by ancient tradition, *begin* with the Poet calling on the Muse for inspiration. Byron's nod to the epic tradition, when he gets around to it finally, in the third Canto, is brief and off-hand. It's a kind of poetic blasphemy. Here is Pope's translation of the opening verses of Homer's Oddessy:

> *The man for wisdom's various arts renown'd,*
> *Long exercised in woes, O Muse! resound;*
> *Who, when his arms had wrought the destined fall*
> *Of sacred Troy, and razed her heaven-built wall,*
> *Wandering from clime to clime, observant stray'd,*
> *Their manners noted, and their states survey'd,*
> *On stormy seas unnumber'd toils he bore,*
> *Safe with his friends to gain his natal shore. . .*

Milton used twenty-six breathless lines to invoke his Muse at the start of Paradise Lost:

> *Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit*
> *Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast*
> *Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,*
> *With loss of Eden, till one greater Man*
> *Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,*
> *Sing Heav'nly Muse that on the secret top*
> *Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire*
> *That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,*
> *In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth*
> *Rose out of Chaos . . .*

The convention demanded humility, too, as here in second stanza of Spenser's Faerie Queen:

> *Helpe then, O holy Virgin chiefe of nine,*
> *Thy weaker Nouice to performe thy will,*
> *Lay forth out of thine euerlasting scryne*
> *The antique rolles, which there lye hidden still,*
> *Of Faerie knights and fairest Tanaquill,*
> *Whom that most noble Briton Prince so long*
> *Sought through the world, and suffered so much ill,*
> *That I must rue his vndeserued wrong:*
> *O helpe thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong.*

Perhaps Byron is boasting that he needs no *heavenly* inspiration. His epic is *mundane*, personal, modern. He resumes the story in the manner of a serial novel by reminding us of the last scene of Canto II. But he gets only as far as the second stanza before wandering away from the narrative again.

II

Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours
Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah why
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?
As those who dote on odours pluck the flowers,
And place them on their breast—but place to die—
Thus the frail beings we would fondly cherish
Are laid within our bosoms but to perish.

Cypress branches ✧ The *cupressus sempervirens* — the "ever-living" cypress — is also known as the "graveyard " cypress. It has been planted near graves since early classical times, probably because individual trees may live for a thousand years or more to mark the place. Here, the cypress wreath symbolises Byron's claim that it is "*fatal to be loved*"

` *Oh, Love! What is it. . .*

III

In her first passion Woman loves her lover,
    In all the others all she loves is Love,
Which grows a habit she can ne'er get over,
    And fits her loosely—like an easy glove,
As you may find, whene'er you like to prove her:
    One man alone at first her heart can move;
She then prefers him in the plural number,
Not finding that the additions much encumber.

IV

I know not if the fault be men's or theirs;
    But one thing's pretty sure; a woman planted
(Unless at once she plunge for life in prayers)—
    After a decent time must be gallanted;
Although, no doubt, her first of love affairs
    Is that to which her heart is wholly granted;
Yet there are some, they say, who have had *none*,
But those who have ne'er end with only *one*.

V

'T is melancholy, and a fearful sign
    Of human frailty, folly, also crime,
That Love and Marriage rarely can combine,
    Although they both are born in the same clime;
Marriage from Love, like vinegar from wine—
    A sad, sour, sober beverage—by Time
Is sharpened from its high celestial flavour
Down to a very homely household savour.

VI

There's something of antipathy, as 't were,
    Between their present and their future state;
A kind of flattery that's hardly fair
    Is used until the truth arrives too late—
Yet what can people do, except despair?
    The same things change their names at such a rate;
For instance—Passion in a lover's glorious,
But in a husband is pronounced uxorious.

All she loves is love ✧ These two lines are a near translation of one of Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*; № 471. In fact, for all his raillery at love and marriage in the next few verses, Byron drafted these lines during weeks when he and the Countess Guiccioli were briefly, happily, "playing house" in a palace he rented at La Mira, on the land-side of Venice. Teresa — accompanied by Byron with the agreement of her husband — was allegedly receiving medical treatment, while the Count remained in Ravenna.

Fits. . . like an easy glove ✧ Proverbial. A pun on "habit", in the (*French*) sense of an outfit of clothing. The French epithet to 'have the gloves' ("*d'en avoir les gants*") of something means to have its first benefits, including in the sense of taking a woman's virginity. In the 18th C. "*avoir eu les gants d'une femme*" meant to have recently enjoyed her sexual favours. Balzac uses the verb "*enganter*" meaning to seduce.

Prove her ✧ That is, to test or try. A euphemism, here.

Additions ✧ A "plural number" is a syntactical, not a mathematical, construct: "they" rather than "him". Additions here are not the stuff of arithmetic proofs but simply *more*.

Planted ✧ Literal translation of the Italian word *piantare*, meaning among other things "abandoned" or, here, "forsaken." It can also mean to supplant, or to betray sexually; Byron uses this meaning in one of his letters in 1819 from Ravenna.

Yet there are some. . . ✧ Another maxim from de Rochefoucauld, *N*º.73.

Also crime ✧ Adultery remained a crime many European countries until the 1970s. It is still a crime in islamic states and (as of 2025) in several states of the USA.

Their present and. . . future state ✧ "Their" refers to love and marriage from the previous verse. Their antipathy is covered up by "a kind of flattery."

VII

Men grow ashamed of being so very fond;
They sometimes also get a little tired (But that, of course,
is rare), and then despond:
The same things cannot always be admired,
Yet 't is "so nominated in the bond",
That both are tied till one shall have expired.
Sad thought! to lose the spouse that was adorning
Our days, and put one's servants into mourning.

VIII

There's doubtless something in domestic doings
Which forms, in fact, true Love's antithesis;
Romances paint at full length people's wooings,
But only give a bust of marriages;
For no one cares for matrimonial cooings,
There's nothing wrong in a connubial kiss:
Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
He would have written sonnets all his life?

IX

All tragedies are finished by a death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage;
The future states of both are left to faith,
For authors fear description might disparage
The worlds to come of both, or fall beneath,
And then both worlds would punish their miscarriage;
So leaving each their priest and prayer-book ready,
They say no more of Death or of the Lady.

X

The only two that in my recollection,
Have sung of Heaven and Hell, or marriage, are
Dante and Milton, and of both the affection
Was hapless in their nuptials, for some bar
Of fault or temper ruined the connection
(Such things, in fact, it don't ask much to mar);
But Dante's Beatrice and Milton's Eve
Were not drawn from their spouses, you conceive.

'Tis so nominated in the bond ✧ Byron means the oaths of the marriage contract in the *Book of Common Prayer*: "…'till death us depart" (changed "…do part" after 1662). Yet he takes this quote from *The Merchant of Venice* (Act IV, i:258) in which the "bond" is Shylock's mortgage on a pound of Antonio's flesh.

Mourning ✧ That is, to bear the expense of new mourning livery and house dress for the servants.

If Laura had been Petrarch's wife ✒ Francesco Petrarca (1304-74) wrote scores of sonnets to a married woman named "Laura" (possibly Laura di Audiberto di Noves, depicted here) whom he first saw in a church in Avignon where his family had followed the Papal court. It is doubtful they had any relationship. Petrach never married but had two illegitimate children. He was a celebrated poet during his lifetime — mainly for a Latin epic poem celebrating the Roman general Scipio Africanus — and a friend of Boccaccio whom Byron admired.

All tragedies are finished by a death… ✧ This couplet has become proverbial; although other writers employ the same idea. Byron is not drawing attention here to theatre, however, but to the unwillingness of (other) writers to examine marriage — including their own — because it is too risky.

Death… Lady ✧ "Death and the Lady" was the title of a sentimental ballad first published a hundred years before Canto III, but still well known in the 1820's.

Dante and Milton ✧ The *Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri and *Paradise Lost* by John Milton are epic poems that treat of Heaven and Hell, but have little to say about marriage. Dante married Gemma Donati in 1285 at the age of 20 and had several children with her. But he maintained a life-long, platonic, attachment to Beatrice Portinari, the daughter of a Florentine banker, whom he immortalised in his poem. She died in 1290 at the age of twenty-four. One character in the *Divine Comedy* speaks of his "fierce wife" (*Inferno*, XVI), but he is Jacopo Rusticucci, a sodomite. Milton's first wife left him, for unknown reasons, after only six weeks of marriage and returned to her parents' house (shades of the Byron separation!). She came back three years later. Byron refers a second time to Milton's first marriage later in this Canto, when speaking of the role of literature — or, more accurately, *rumour* — in fame.

XI

Some persons say that Dante meant Theology
By Beatrice, and not a mistress—I,
Although my opinion may require apology,
Deem this a commentator's phantasy,
Unless indeed it was from his own knowledge he
Decided thus, and showed good reason why;
I think that Dante's more abstruse ecstatics
Meant to personify the Mathematics.

Mathematics ✧ A sly reference to Lady Byron. Thomas Medwin reported in his *Conversations* that Byron said she was "governed by what she called fixed rules and principles, squared mathematically. She would have made an excellent wrangler at Cambridge". At Cambridge University, a *wrangler* is a student placed in the first class of the mathematical tripos.

XII

Haidée and Juan were not married, but
The fault was theirs, not mine: it is not fair,
Chaste reader, then, in any way to put
The blame on me, unless you wish they were;
Then if you'd have them wedded, please to shut
The book which treats of this erroneous pair,
Before the consequences grow too awful;
'T is dangerous to read of loves unlawful.

Before the consequences... ✧ Too late! Byron did not supply the details in Canto II, but made it pretty clear that Juan and Haidée consummated their bond in his sea-cave hideaway. The sad confirmation of their congress comes in Canto IV.

XIII

Yet they were happy,—happy in the illicit
Indulgence of their innocent desires;
But more imprudent grown with every visit,
Haidée forgot the island was her Sire's;
When we have what we like 't is hard to miss it,
At least in the beginning, ere one tires;
Thus she came often, not a moment losing,
Whilst her piratical papa was cruising.

XIV

Let not his mode of raising cash seem strange,
Although he fleeced the flags of every nation,
For into a Prime Minister but change
His title, and 't is nothing but taxation;
But he, more modest, took an humbler range
Of Life, and in an honester vocation
Pursued o'er the high seas his watery journey,
And merely practised as a sea-attorney.

sea-attorney ✧ Byron had reason enough to direct barbs at men like Sir Samuel Romilly or even at his own attorney, John Hansen, who was lazy and who did not bother to substantiate his exorbitant charges. But the profession is a common target. Dr Johnson, according to Boswell, said of an acquaintance that "he did not care to speak ill of any man behind his back, but he believed the gentleman was an attorney."

XV

The good old gentleman had been detained
By winds and waves, and some important captures;
And, in the hope of more, at sea remained,
Although a squall or two had damped his raptures,
By swamping one of the prizes; he had chained
His prisoners, dividing them like chapters
In numbered lots; they all had cuffs and collars,
And averaged each from ten to a hundred dollars.

XVI

Some he disposed of off Cape Matapan,
Among his friends the Mainots; some he sold
To his Tunis correspondents, save one man
Tossed overboard unsaleable (being old);
The rest—save here and there some richer one,
Reserved for future ransom—in the hold,
Were linked alike, as, for the common people, he
Had a large order from the Dey of Tripoli.

XVII

The merchandise was served in the same way,
Pieced out for different marts in the Levant,
Except some certain portions of the prey,
Light classic articles of female want,
French stuffs, lace, tweezers, toothpicks, a bidet,
Guitars and castanets from Alicant,
All which selected from the spoil he gathers,
Robbed for his daughter by the best of fathers.

XVIII

A monkey, a Dutch mastiff, a mackaw,
Two parrots, with a Persian cat and kittens,
He chose from several animals he saw—
A terrier, too, which once had been a Briton's,
Who dying on the coast of Ithaca,
The peasants gave the poor dumb thing a pittance:
These to secure in this strong blowing weather,
He caged in one huge hamper altogether.

Good old gentleman ✧ An ironic way to describe a pirate, of course. Lambro is one of the more intriguing characters of the poem. He is an outlaw and a brutal slaver. He is violent and tyrannical, but self-controlled and strategic. He is also a patriot, of sorts, and a tender father. Like Juan, Byron had never known his father. "Mad Jack" Byron was a dashing, wastrel and a cashiered naval officer who married Catherine Gordon of Gight for her (small) fortune that he squandered within a year or so. He died a bankrupt, philandering drunk in France, fleeing both his family and his creditors, when his son was not yet three. Byron also describes the Count Guiccioli as a "good old man" in a conversation recorded by Medwin.

Mainots ✧ Now more often known as Maniots, the inhabitants of the southernmost peninsula of the Peloponnese claim to be descendants of the Spartans. They historically indulged in piracy and were among the fiercest opponents of Ottoman rule of Greece. Byron believed he was nearly attacked by Maniot pirates during his youthful sojourn in Greece in 1809-10. He later employed Maniots during his fatal mercenary expedition to Greece in 1824.

Tunis correspondents ✧ That is, agents. Byron gives Lambro a multinational trading business, stretching from the Levant in the east to Alicant on the southern coast of Spain and from Cape Matapan in the Peloponese to Tunis and Tripoli in North Africa. For 300 years until the early 19th century, Barbary corsairs raided European coastal regions from Iceland to Italy, taking an estimated 1-1.5million Christian captives whom they sold into slavery in the markets of Algiers and Tunis. European and US naval and marine forces launched two Barbary Wars in 1805 and 1815 to defeat the pirates and to put an end to 'tribute' payments that, under Jefferson, were consuming as much as 20% of US federal revenue. Hence the references to "the shores of Tripoli" in the Marine Corps Hymn.

A bidet ✧ The more common variant of this list is "…lace, tweezers, toothpicks, teapot, tray." In his fair-copy of Cantos III and IV (January, 1820), Byron writes "bidet" but, in a marginal note, gives Murray the option of making the substitution "in case the other piece of feminine furniture frightens you." Murray, ever-squeamish, took the option.

The best of fathers ✧ Another half-ironic epithet that may recall Sophia Western's description of her blockhead-of-a-father, Squire Western, in Fielding's *Tom Jones*. But perhaps a more likely source for the phrase is the claim of the heroine of Jean-Jaques Rousseau's epistolary novel *Julie ou la nouvelle Hélöise* about her father (Vol. 1 Letter XX), the Baron d'Etange, who has however prevented her from marrying the man she loves, her correspondent and former tutor, Saint-Preux. Julie was a very popular novel at the time. Byron had read it several times.

A monkey… ✧ Byron kept a menagerie in his Italian houses that at various times included horses, a goat, dogs, a badger, a civet, several cats, birds (including an eagle) and monkeys that he collected in different places and that travelled with him.

XIX

Then, having settled his marine affairs,
Despatching single cruisers here and there,
His vessel having need of some repairs,
He shaped his course to where his daughter fair
Continued still her hospitable cares;
But that part of the coast being shoal and bare,
And rough with reefs which ran out many a mile,
His port lay on the other side o' the isle.

XX

And there he went ashore without delay,
Having no custom-house nor quarantine
To ask him awkward questions on the way,
About the time and place where he had been:
He left his ship to be hove down next day,
With orders to the people to careen;
So that all hands were busy beyond measure,
In getting out goods, ballast, guns, and treasure.

Hove to. . . careen ✧ That is, to drag the vessel onto the shore, tilt it to expose the bottom and to clean it and to re-caulk the seams between the strakes.

XXI

Arriving at the summit of a hill
Which overlooked the white walls of his home,
He stopped.—What singular emotions fill
Their bosoms who have been induced to roam!
With fluttering doubts if all be well or ill—
With love for many, and with fears for some;
All feelings which o'erleap the years long lost,
And bring our hearts back to their starting-post.

XXII

The approach of home to husbands and to sires,
After long travelling by land or water,
Most naturally some small doubt inspires—
A female family's a serious matter, (None trusts the sex
more, or so much admires—
But they hate flattery, so I never flatter);
Wives in their husbands' absences grow subtler,
And daughters sometimes run off with the butler.

XXIII

An honest gentleman at his return
May not have the good fortune of Ulysses;
Not all lone matrons for their husbands mourn,
Or show the same dislike to suitors' kisses;
The odds are that he finds a handsome urn
To his memory—and two or three young misses
Born to some friend, who holds his wife and riches—
And that *his* Argus—bites him by the breeches.

XXIV

If single, probably his plighted Fair
Has in his absence wedded some rich miser;
But all the better, for the happy pair
May quarrel, and, the lady growing wiser,
He may resume his amatory care
As *cavalier servente*, or despise her;
And that his sorrow may not be a dumb one,
Writes odes on the Inconstancy of Woman.

XXV

And oh! ye gentlemen who have already
Some chaste *liaison* of the kind—I mean
An honest friendship with a married lady—
The only thing of this sort ever seen
To last—of all connections the most steady,
And the true Hymen, (the first's but a screen)—
Yet, for all that, keep not too long away—
I've known the absent wronged four times a day.

XXVI

Lambro, our sea-solicitor, who had
Much less experience of dry land than Ocean,
On seeing his own chimney-smoke, felt glad;
But not knowing metaphysics, had no notion
Of the true reason of his not being sad,
Or that of any other strong emotion;
He loved his child, and would have wept the loss of her,
But knew the cause no more than a philosopher.

The good fortune of Ulysses ✧ The hero of *The Odyssey* ("Ulysses" is the Latin form of "Odysseus") returns home from the Trojan war, after decades of wandering mis-adventures, in disguise. He finds his house occupied by would-be suitors of his wife Penelope who are feasting and drinking at his expense. His faithful dog, Argos, who has been neglected and lies close to death on a dung heap, recognises his master as he approaches the house and has just the strength to drop his ears and wag his tail. But Odysseus, to protect his disguise, ignores him and, shedding a tear, passes by.

Cavalier servente ✧ The socially accepted lover of a married woman. A peculiarly Italian tradition, due in Byron's view (as reported by Thomas Medwin), to the absurdities of the dower system that saw desirable young (noble) women given by their greedy fathers in marriage to much older wealthy men because the latter would accept them without a substantial dower. In such cases, she might maintain a relationship with another escort, as long as they maintained the appearance of a strictly platonic devotion in public. In 1819 Byron's entered, rather unwillingly at first, into such a relationship the nineteen-year-old Theresa Guiccioli. By the time Canto III was published, Byron was renting the upper floor a palace in Ravenna from Theresa's husband — the refined, but eccentric, sixty-year-old Count Guiccioli — who occupied the lower floor with his wife.

Hymen ✧ The Greek god of marriage and the *virginal membrane* that partly closes off the external orifice of the vagina and so is a 'screen' to conjugal relations. Byron suggests that these "chaste" *cavalier servente* relationships are a true marriage.

Four times a day ✧ Byron boasting? Someone — perhaps John Murray — notes beside this line in the galley proof: "Very bad"

Lambro ✧ Lambro Katzones was a famous Greek/Albanian pirate mentioned in several of Byron's literary sources for ***Don⚔Juan*** and by Byron in his early poem *The Bride of Abydos* (1813). Byron's notes to that poem explain: "Lambro Canzani, a Greek, famous for his efforts in 1789-90, for the independence of his country. Abandoned by the Russians, he became a pirate, and the Archipelago was the scene of his enterprises. He is said to be still alive at St Petersburg…"

XXVII

He saw his white walls shining in the sun,
His garden trees all shadowy and green;
He heard his rivulet's light bubbling run,
The distant dog-bark; and perceived between
The umbrage of the wood, so cool and dun,
The moving figures, and the sparkling sheen
Of arms (in the East all arm)—and various dyes
Of coloured garbs, as bright as butterflies.

His white walls ✧ This scene of Lambro returning home, not in disguise but unrecognised, approaching through the garden and finding his retainers idling and feasting again recalls Odysseus returning home or, perhaps, Moses returning from Mount Sinai to find the Israelites celebrating the Golden Calf. The contrast between pastoral celebration and the hidden menace of Lambro's anger is the main narrative device of this Canto. His passage from the port to the hill-top and down through the orchard to secretly enter his house is the only movement.

Ali Pasha ✒ The portrait of Lambro in Cantos III and IV recalls the wily Ali Pasha of Tepelenë, a brigand, sadist, pederast and Ottoman tyrant of Albania and Western Greece. Byron stayed a few days with him in October 1809 during his tour of Greece with Cam Hobhouse. By the time he came to write Canto III, a decade later, Ali Pasha then in his 80s had revolted against the Sultan Mahmud II and had been deposed by overwhelming Turkish force. He was under arrest in a monastery on an island in the lake of Ionnania where the Turks assassinated him in 1822. This depiction of Ali Pasha is by a modern Albanian painter, Agim Sulaj. Byron's verse portrait of Ali can be found in Canto II of *Childe Harold*, drafted shortly after his visit:

In marble-pav'd pavilion, where a spring
Of living water from the centre rose,
Whose bubbling did a genial freshness fling,
And soft voluptuous couches breath'd repose,
Ali reclin'd, a man of war and woes;
Yet in his lineaments ye cannot trace,
While Gentleness her milder radiance throws
Along that aged venerable face,
The deeds that lurk beneath, and stain him with disgrace.

XXVIII

And as the spot where they appear he nears,
Surprised at these unwonted signs of idling,
He hears—alas! no music of the spheres,
But an unhallowed, earthly sound of fiddling!
A melody which made him doubt his ears,
The cause being past his guessing or unriddling;
A pipe, too, and a drum, and shortly after—
A most unoriental roar of laughter.

Music of the spheres ✧ The cosmology of the Graeco-Roman astronomer and mathematician, Ptolemy, held that the sun, moon and stars were fixed to the inside of nested crystal spheres whose rotation around the earth produced an etherial music — the model of harmony — that mortals can not hear. But Juan and Haidée's love threatens Lambro's *household order* and he straight-way notices things awry: "unhallowed" sounds, unaccustomed laughter, servants dancing a military dance as if it were festive…

XXIX

And still more nearly to the place advancing,
Descending rather quickly the declivity,
Through the waved branches o'er the greensward glancing,
'Midst other indications of festivity,
Seeing a troop of his domestics dancing
Like Dervises, who turn as on a pivot, he
Perceived it was the Pyrrhic dance so martial,
To which the Levantines are very partial.

XXX

And further on a troop of Grecian girls,
The first and tallest her white kerchief waving,
Were strung together like a row of pearls,
Linked hand in hand, and dancing; each too having
Down her white neck long floating auburn curls— (The least
of which would set ten poets raving);
Their leader sang—and bounded to her song
With choral step and voice the virgin throng.

XXXI

And here, assembled cross-legged round their trays,
Small social parties just begun to dine;
Pilaus and meats of all sorts met the gaze,
And flasks of Samian and of Chian wine,
And sherbet cooling in the porous vase;
Above them their dessert grew on its vine;—
The orange and pomegranate nodding o'er,
Dropped in their laps, scarce plucked, their mellow store.

XXXII

A band of children, round a snow-white ram,
There wreathe his venerable horns with flowers;
While peaceful as if still an unweaned lamb,
The patriarch of the flock all gently cowers
His sober head, majestically tame,
Or eats from out the palm, or playful lowers
His brow, as if in act to butt, and then
Yielding to their small hands, draws back again.

The Pyrrhic dance The *Pyrrhichios* dance included combat-like movements, performed in full armour in close-order, that the Spartans used as military training for their phalanges. Homer describes Achilles dancing the *pyrrhichios* around the pyre of his friend Patroclus. This romantic rendering by Jean-Léon Gérôme hardly does a better job of conveying the military flavour than Byron's inaccurate comparison with the the trance-inducing whirl of the Sufi sects called Dervishes. Later in this Canto, the "trimmer" poet mentions the *Pyrrhichios*, again.

Samian and Chian wine ✧ Wine from the Ionian islands of Samos and Chios that also figures in the *Isles of Greece* lyric

Dropped in their laps ✧ This description of the feast draws in traditional ideas of the sur-abundance of paradise, in which Lambro is an intruder

Snow-white ram ✧ What is Byron getting at with this little scene? Perhaps the ram is an image of Lambro (get it?) whose calm demeanour conceals his explosive power and patriarchal possession. Or perhaps Byron was thinking of a scene in Book IX of the *Excursion* — a poem he tells us later in the Canto (and elsewhere) that he despises — where Wordsworth sees a snow-white ram on a river bank, his image reflected in the stream. Byron's ram makes more sense, in context. . . *just*.

XXXIII

Their classical profiles, and glittering dresses,
    Their large black eyes, and soft seraphic cheeks,
Crimson as cleft pomegranates, their long tresses,
    The gesture which enchants, the eye that speaks,
The innocence which happy childhood blesses,
    Made quite a picture of these little Greeks;
So that the philosophical beholder
Sighed for their sakes—that they should e'er grow older.

XXXIV

Afar, a dwarf buffoon stood telling tales
    To a sedate grey circle of old smokers,
Of secret treasures found in hidden vales,
    Of wonderful replies from Arab jokers,
Of charms to make good gold and cure bad ails,
    Of rocks bewitched that open to the knockers,
Of magic ladies who, by one sole act,
Transformed their lords to beasts (but that's a fact).

XXXV

Here was no lack of innocent diversion
    For the imagination or the senses,
Song, dance, wine, music, stories from the Persian,
    All pretty pastimes in which no offence is;
But Lambro saw all these things with aversion,
    Perceiving in his absence such expenses,
Dreading that climax of all human ills,
The inflammation of his weekly bills.

XXXVI

Ah! what is man? what perils still environ
    The happiest mortals even after dinner!
A day of gold from out an age of iron
    Is all that Life allows the luckiest sinner;
Pleasure (whene'er she sings, at least) 's a Siren,
    That lures, to flay alive, the young beginner;
Lambro's reception at his people's banquet
Was such as fire accords to a wet blanket.

Magic ladies ✧ Take your pick: there's Circe from Book X of the *Odyssey* who turned Odysseus' crew to swine, or; Armida, the enchantress of Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* who turns the Crusaders to animals, or; Alcina, the seductive witch in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* who turned former lovers out to pasture, or; everyday cuckholdry that "puts horns" on men.

Stories from the Persian Bryon knew classical Persian poetry in translation and used Persian models for his "Turkish Tales" (1813). The so-called "Arabian Nights" — more properly "The Thousand Nights and One Night" — is a collection of fantastic, romantic, heroic and picaresque tales that appear, from the names of the story-teller Sheherazade, and the ruler, Shahriyah, to have a Perisan origin. They first appeared in an English translation in 1706, so were probably known to Byron. But they are far from "innocent" as Sir Richard Burton's un-expurgated, annotated version of 1885 demonstrated. The painting is by Ferdinand Keller.

What perils still environ ✧ An in-joke Byron includes for his fellow "Cantabs." In a parody of a rhyme from Sam. Butler's poem *Hudibras*…

> *Ay me! what perils do environ*
> *The man that meddles with cold iron;*

…the undergraduates substituted the nickname of a certain tradesman, "hot Hiron," for the last phrase.

Wet blanket ✧ The epithet was probably already proverbial but the OED quotes the earliest use from 1830, a decade after the appearance of Canto III. Still, this verse is a jumble of images: chagrin, flaying alive and party-pooping make an awkward group.

XXXVII

He—being a man who seldom used a word
    Too much, and wishing gladly to surprise
(In general he surprised men with the sword)
    His daughter—had not sent before to advise
Of his arrival, so that no one stirred;
    And long he paused to re-assure his eyes,
In fact much more astonished than delighted,
To find so much good company invited.

XXXVIII

He did not know (alas! how men will lie)
    That a report (especially the Greeks)
Avouched his death (such people never die),
    And put his house in mourning several weeks,—
But now their eyes and also lips were dry;
    The bloom, too, had returned to Haidée's cheeks:
Her tears, too, being returned into their fount,
She now kept house upon her own account.

XXXIX

Hence all this rice, meat, dancing, wine, and fiddling,
    Which turned the isle into a place of pleasure;
The servants all were getting drunk or idling,
    A life which made them happy beyond measure.
Her father's hospitality seemed middling,
    Compared with what Haidée did with his treasure;
'T was wonderful how things went on improving,
While she had not one hour to spare from loving.

XL

Perhaps you think, in stumbling on this feast,
    He flew into a passion, and in fact
There was no mighty reason to be pleased;
    Perhaps you prophesy some sudden act,
The whip, the rack, or dungeon at the least,
    To teach his people to be more exact,
And that, proceeding at a very high rate,
He showed the royal *penchants* of a pirate.

Royal penchants ✧ The rhyme is the sort now found in rhyming dictionaries — Byron uses it again, reversed, in Canto IV — but the targets of the jibe are the *anciens régimes* of Europe who behaviour was no better than a pirate's.

XLI

You're wrong.—He was the mildest mannered man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat;
With such true breeding of a gentleman,
You never could divine his real thought;
No courtier could, and scarcely woman can
Gird more deceit within a petticoat;
Pity he loved adventurous life's variety,
He was so great a loss to good society.

XLII

Advancing to the nearest dinner tray,
Tapping the shoulder of the nighest guest,
With a peculiar smile, which, by the way,
Boded no good, whatever it expressed,
He asked the meaning of this holiday;
The vinous Greek to whom he had addressed
His question, much too merry to divine
The questioner, filled up a glass of wine,

Mildest mannered man ✧ Likely a reference to Ali Pasha whose gracious manner, cultivated tastes and constant endearments to the young Byron during his brief visit, disguised a bloody ruthlessness. On their arrival in his 'capital' of Ionannina in 1809, Byron and J.C.Hobhouse observed an arm, torn from the shoulder, and part of the flank of the body, hung in a tree. These, it seems, was the remains of a priest and insurrectionist who had been tortured and executed.

Within a petticoat ✧ The petty-coat was a male undergarment until the 16th century; a sort of doublet or waist-coat warn for warmth. Of course, the deceit 'girded' by a petticoat is as much about sexual intrigue as stratagems.

Tapping the shoulder ✧ A "tap on the shoulder" has been a slang term for "arrest" since the 18th century.

The vinous Greek ✐ Velazquez' image of The Triumph of Bacchus, a Roman rather than "vinous Greek", depicts a group of engaging, rustic drunks and a distracted god. The three yokels that Lambro interrogates are part plot device: they reveal the reason for the party and also provoke Lambro with the news he has been usurped in his own domain. They are also part comic delay in the manner of the Gravedigger in *Hamlet* or the Gatekeeper in *MacBeth*. Byron gives them the only vernacular dialogue in the Canto; directly quoted, unlike Lambro's questions.

XLIII

And without turning his facetious head,
Over his shoulder, with a Bacchant air,
Presented the o'erflowing cup, and said,
"Talking's dry work, I have no time to spare."
A second hiccuped, "Our old Master's dead,
You'd better ask our Mistress who's his heir."
"Our Mistress!" quoth a third: "Our Mistress!—pooh!
You mean our Master—not the old, but new."

XLIV

These rascals, being new comers, knew not whom
They thus addressed—and Lambro's visage fell—
And o'er his eye a momentary gloom
Passed, but he strove quite courteously to quell
The expression, and endeavouring to resume
His smile, requested one of them to tell
The name and quality of his new patron,
Who seemed to have turned Haidée into a matron.

XLV

"I know not," quoth the fellow, "who or what
He is, nor whence he came—and little care;
But this I know, that this roast capon's fat,
And that good wine ne'er washed down better fare;
And if you are not satisfied with that,
Direct your questions to my neighbour there;
He'll answer all for better or for worse,
For none likes more to hear himself converse."

XLVI

I said that Lambro was a man of patience,
And certainly he showed the best of breeding,
Which scarce even France, the Paragon of nations,
E'er saw her most polite of sons exceeding;
He bore these sneers against his near relations,
His own anxiety, his heart, too, bleeding,
The insults, too, of every servile glutton,
Who all the time was eating up his mutton.

Capon ✧ A rooster or cockerel that has been castrated when a chick. The result is a fattier, less gamey meat often preferred to that of hens.

To hear himself converse ✧ Byron added a note at this point in the *MS.* comprising a verse, in Italian *ottava rima*, from a long 15th C. poem *Morgante Maggiore* by Luigi Pulci; a favourite, and one of his models for ***Don⚔Juan***. The giant Morgante is the squire of Orlando (Roland), a crusader. At one point he meets Margutte, a sort of live tilting-dummy who, however, is only a half-giant. Morgante offers friendship but demands, first, a statement of faith as a kind of *shibboleth*. Margutte then launches into a rabelaisian parody of the christian *credo* in which he declares his fealty to capons, beer, butter and wine. . . among other things. The verse Byron quotes — without explanation, but apparently in reference to the Pulci poem — is from the start of this hilarious, blasphemous, mockery.

XLVII

Now in a person used to much command—
To bid men come, and go, and come again—
To see his orders done, too, out of hand—
Whether the word was death, or but the chain—
It may seem strange to find his manners bland;
Yet such things are, which I cannot explain,
Though, doubtless, he who can command himself
Is good to govern—almost as a Guelf.

To bid men come, and go ✧ "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The Centurion in *Matthew* 8:9, KJV

The chain ✧ That is, imprisonment

Guelf ✧ In the 12th century two broad alliances, nicknamed the Guelphs and Ghibbelines, struggled for the allegiance of the city states of Italy. Byron's reference is, however, a jibe at the contemporary House of Hannover — Kings George III and IV — who were descendants of the original Guelph, Henry of Saxony. Byron, like many others, considered George IV unfit to govern and unable to command himself or the oppressive governments who served him.

XLVIII

Not that he was not sometimes rash or so,
But never in his real and serious mood;
Then calm, concentrated, and still, and slow,
He lay coiled like the Boa in the wood;
With him it never was a word and blow,
His angry word once o'er, he shed no blood,
But in his silence there was much to rue,
And his *one* blow left little work for *two*.

Boa ✧ A large, immensely strong South American snake that kills by squeezing the life from its victim. Here, Lambro is the serpent in paradise.

XLIX

He asked no further questions, and proceeded
On to the house, but by a private way,
So that the few who met him hardly heeded,
So little they expected him that day;
If love paternal in his bosom pleaded
For Haidée's sake, is more than I can say,
But certainly to one deemed dead returning,
This revel seemed a curious mode of mourning.

L

If all the dead could now return to life, (Which God forbid!)
or some, or a great many,
For instance, if a husband or his wife (Nuptial examples
are as good as any),
No doubt whate'er might be their former strife,
The present weather would be much more rainy—
Tears shed into the grave of the connection
Would share most probably its resurrection.

LI

He entered in the house no more his home,
A thing to human feelings the most trying,
And harder for the heart to overcome,
Perhaps, than even the mental pangs of dying;
dTo find our hearthstone turned into a tomb,
And round its once warm precincts palely lying
The ashes of our hopes, is a deep grief,
Beyond a *single gentleman's* belief.

Hearthstone turned into a tomb ✧ Being thought dead, Lambro might really have found his hearthstone turned to a "tomb." But by the end of the verse it is clear that Byron is referring, too, to his own traumatic experience of separation and exile. It's a recurrent theme in ***Don⚔Juan***, for example in the death of Don José in Canto I.

LII

He entered in the house—his home no more,
For without hearts there is no home;—and felt
The solitude of passing his own door
Without a welcome: *there* he long had dwelt,
There his few peaceful days Time had swept o'er,
There his worn bosom and keen eye would melt
Over the innocence of that sweet child,
His only shrine of feelings undefiled.

LIII

He was a man of a strange temperament,
Of mild demeanour though of savage mood,
Moderate in all his habits, and content
With temperance in pleasure, as in food,
Quick to perceive, and strong to bear, and meant
For something better, if not wholly good;
His Country's wrongs and his despair to save her
Had stung him from a slave to an enslaver.

LIV

The love of power, and rapid gain of gold,
The hardness by long habitude produced,
The dangerous life in which he had grown old,
The mercy he had granted oft abused,
The sights he was accustomed to behold,
The wild seas, and wild men with whom he cruised,
Had cost his enemies a long repentance,
And made him a good friend, but bad acquaintance.

LV

But something of the spirit of old Greece
Flashed o'er his soul a few heroic rays,
Such as lit onward to the Golden Fleece
His predecessors in the Colchian days;
'T is true he had no ardent love for peace—
Alas! his country showed no path to praise:
Hate to the world and war with every nation
He waged, in vengeance of her degradation.

The Golden Fleece ✧ A reference to the legend of Jason's quest, in his ship the *Argo*, for the fleece of a golden ram that had stolen a Greek boy. He found the fleece at Colchis on the far eastern shore of the Black Sea, guarded by a dragon. The *Argonautica* — "The Voyage of the Argo" — by Apollonious of Rhodes was a much-admired 3rd century epic poem. As a Greek adventure into the barbarian east it suggested the sort of courage Byron wished to see the modern Greeks display in overthrowing their Turkish yoke.

LVI

Still o'er his mind the influence of the clime
Shed its Ionian elegance, which showed
Its power unconsciously full many a time,—
A taste seen in the choice of his abode,
A love of music and of scenes sublime,
A pleasure in the gentle stream that flowed
Past him in crystal, and a joy in flowers,
Bedewed his spirit in his calmer hours.

LVII

But whatsoe'er he had of love reposed
On that belovéd daughter; she had been
The only thing which kept his heart unclosed
Amidst the savage deeds he had done and seen,
A lonely pure affection unopposed:
There wanted but the loss of this to wean
His feelings from all milk of human kindness,
And turn him like the Cyclops mad with blindness.

Cyclops ✧ The one-eyed giant, Polyphemus — a "circle-eye" because it was planted in the middle of his forehead — who captured Oddysseus and his men in Book IX of *The Oddyssey*, intending to eat them. Oddysseus got the monster drunk, blinded him by putting his eye out with a burnt branch, and crept away with all his men, hiding among a flock of the Cylcops' sheep. From the safety of his ship, Oddysseus taunted the blind giant, who raged with frustration on the shore.

LVIII

The cubless tigress in her jungle raging
Is dreadful to the shepherd and the flock;
The Ocean when its yeasty war is waging
Is awful to the vessel near the rock;
But violent things will sooner bear assuaging,
Their fury being spent by its own shock,
Than the stern, single, deep, and wordless ire
Of a strong human heart, and in a Sire.

LIX

It is a hard although a common case
To find our children running restive—they
In whom our brightest days we would retrace,
Our little selves re-formed in finer clay,
Just as old age is creeping on apace,
And clouds come o'er the sunset of our day,
They kindly leave us, though not quite alone,
But in good company—the gout or stone.

Gout or stone ✧ Both gout — an inflammatory arthritis, usually of joints in the big toe — and kidney-stones are caused by high levels of uric acid in the blood. Both have been associated with obesity and old age.

LX

Yet a fine family is a fine thing (Provided they don't come in after dinner);
'T is beautiful to see a matron bring
Her children up (if nursing them don't thin her);
Like cherubs round an altar-piece they cling
To the fire-side (a sight to touch a sinner).
A lady with her daughters or her nieces
Shine like a guinea and seven-shilling pieces.

After dinner ✧ Boswell twice carps at the practice of presenting the children after dinner in his *Life of Johnson* because it obliged the guests to offer "foolish compliments to please their parents." At a dinner at Mrs Thrale's on 10 April, 1776, Johnson agreed with him. "…we may be excused for not caring much about other people's children, for there are many who care very little about their own."

Guinea and seven-shilling pieces ✧ George III issued a gold seven-shilling piece — one third the value of a guinea — in 1797 to make up for the lack of silver coin in circulation. It was last issued in 1813 and, when new, gleamed.

LXI

Old Lambro passed unseen a private gate,
And stood within his hall at eventide;
Meantime the lady and her lover sate
At wassail in their beauty and their pride:
An ivory inlaid table spread with state
Before them, and fair slaves on every side;
Gems, gold, and silver, formed the service mostly,
Mother of pearl and coral the less costly.

Sate at wassail ✧ To "sate" is to satisfy or indulge; "wassail" originally meant a salutation such as in a toast, but came to mean a feast or revelry. Byron does not tell us the significance of the feast that Lambro witnesses, but he implies it is a sort of betrothal banquet. Byron had his own experiences of Turkish Albania, and Constantinople to draw on for some of the details of the clothing, furnishings and food. But he readily acknowledged to Murray that he borrowed others from *A Narrative of Ten Years' Residence in Tripoli in Africa* attributed to a former British consul, Richard Tully in 1816 (in fact, Tully's un-named sister-in-law wrote it).

LXII

The dinner made about a hundred dishes;
Lamb and pistachio nuts—in short, all meats,
And saffron soups, and sweetbreads; and the fishes
Were of the finest that e'er flounced in nets,
Dressed to a Sybarite's most pampered wishes;
The beverage was various sherbets
Of raisin, orange, and pomegranate juice,
Squeezed through the rind, which makes it best for use.

Sybarite ✧ The citizens of the prosperous Greek colony of Sybaris in Southern Italy — destroyed by wars with its neighbours in the 6th century BCE — were said by later, censorious, Roman writers (hah!) to have indulged in luxurious excesses and exotic pleasure-seeking.

LXIII

These were ranged round, each in its crystal ewer,
And fruits, and date-bread loaves closed the repast,
And Mocha's berry, from Arabia pure,
In small fine China cups, came in at last;
Gold cups of filigree, made to secure
The hand from burning, underneath them placed;
Cloves, cinnamon, and saffron too were boiled
Up with the coffee, which (I think) they spoiled.

LXIV

The hangings of the room were tapestry, made
Of velvet panels, each of different hue,
And thick with damask flowers of silk inlaid;
And round them ran a yellow border too;
The upper border, richly wrought, displayed,
Embroidered delicately o'er with blue,
Soft Persian sentences, in lilac letters,
From poets, or the moralists their betters.

LXV

These Oriental writings on the wall,
Quite common in those countries, are a kind
Of monitors adapted to recall,
Like skulls at Memphian banquets, to the mind,
The words which shook Belshazzar in his hall,
And took his kingdom from him: You will find,
Though sages may pour out their wisdom's treasure,
There is no sterner moralist than Pleasure.

LXVI

A Beauty at the season's close grown hectic,
A Genius who has drunk himself to death,
A Rake turned methodistic, or Eclectic— (For that's the name
they like to pray beneath)—
But most, an Alderman struck apoplectic,
Are things that really take away the breath,—
And show that late hours, wine, and love are able
To do not much less damage than the table.

Memphian banquets ✧ The Old Kingdom Pharaohs of Egypt ruled from Memphis at the southern tip of the Nile Delta, where they constructed their pyramid tombs. Later writers said that they kept a skull on the table at their feasts to remind them of their mortality, although they would be gods in the afterlife.

The words that shook Belshazzar ✧ At a feast of the Babylonian king, according to the Israelite prophet Daniel (Book V), where the guests drank wine from the sacred vessels of the Temple of Jerusalem, a disembodied hand wrote a mysterious phrase on the wall that Daniel interpreted for the alarmed Balshazzar: "Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:25–28, KJV)

A beauty at the season's close ✧ Lessons from the excesses of indulgence. The first may refer to the hysteria of Caroline Lamb after Byron broke off with her. The second, possibly, to the celebrated playwright, statesman and owner of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who died a ruined drunk in 1816. Byron's brief participation on the management committee of the theatre was cut short by his flight from England in June, 1816

Methodistic or Eclectic ✧ Methodism, a puritanical Anglican sect in the early 19th century, would have been a dour end for a Rake. The *Eclectic Review* was a monthly magazine, founded in 1805 by a Dissenting Minister on "nonconformist" principles. It reviewed Byron's poems with literate derision — for their facetious tone as much as for their immorality — but praised Southey — with whom its editor corresponded — Coleridge and Wordsworth.

LXVII

Haidée and Juan carpeted their feet
On crimson satin, bordered with pale blue;
Their sofa occupied three parts complete
Of the apartment—and appeared quite new;
The velvet cushions (for a throne more meet)
Were scarlet, from whose glowing centre grew
A sun embossed in gold, whose rays of tissue,
Meridian-like, were seen all light to issue.

LXVIII

Crystal and marble, plate and porcelain,
Had done their work of splendour; Indian mats
And Persian carpets, which the heart bled to stain,
Over the floors were spread; gazelles and cats,
And dwarfs and blacks, and such like things, that gain
Their bread as ministers and favourites (that's
To say, by degradation) mingled there
As plentiful as in a court, or fair.

Gain their bread ✧ As we'll see, below, the "trimmer" poet, who preferred "pudding to *no* praise", will soon be added to this list.

LXIX

There was no want of lofty mirrors, and
The tables, most of ebony inlaid
With mother of pearl or ivory, stood at hand,
Or were of tortoise-shell or rare woods made,
Fretted with gold or silver:—by command
The greater part of these were rarely spread
With viands and sherbets in ice—and wine—
Kept for all comers at all hours to dine.

Rarely spread ✧ Some editors have "corrected" this to "ready spread" but "rarely" in this case means "to an unusual degree; exceptionally, very" (OED).

LXX

Of all the dresses I select Haidée's:
She wore two jelicks—one was of pale yellow;
Of azure, pink, and white was her chemise—
'Neath which her breast heaved like a little billow:
With buttons formed of pearls as large as peas,
All gold and crimson shone her jelick's fellow,
And the striped white gauze baracan that bound her,
Like fleecy clouds about the moon, flowed round her.

Jelick ✧ An embroidered bodice, usually sleeveless, with pockets, over a Turkish woman's tunic. In the illustration of Sheherazade (above) she is wearing an orange-red jelick.

Baracan ✧ "Baracan" is a French/Portuguese version of an Arabic word for a cloak of coarse camel or goat hair worn by e.g. shepherds. But in European use it usually refers to a cloth of fine gauze.

LXXI

One large gold bracelet clasped each lovely arm,
Lockless—so pliable from the pure gold
That the hand stretched and shut it without harm,
The limb which it adorned its only mould;
So beautiful—its very shape would charm,
And clinging, as if loath to lose its hold,
The purest ore enclosed the whitest skin
That e'er by precious metal was held in.

LXXII

Around, as Princess of her father's land,
A like gold bar above her instep rolled
Announced her rank; twelve rings were on her hand;
Her hair was starred with gems; her veil's fine fold
Below her breast was fastened with a band
Of lavish pearls, whose worth could scarce be told;
Her orange silk full Turkish trousers furled
About the prettiest ankle in the world.

Around... rank ✧ This sentence is a tangle of Latinate word order, beginning with a prefixed preposition. A gold band, like that on her arm, rolled around Haidée's ankle, a sign of her rank as "Princess" of the Island. The Keller painting of Sheherazade shows her wearing such an anklet.

LXXIII

Her hair's long auburn waves down to her heel
Flowed like an Alpine torrent which the sun
Dyes with his morning light,—and would conceal
Her person if allowed at large to run,
And still they seemed resentfully to feel
The silken fillet's curb, and sought to shun
Their bonds whene'er some Zephyr caught began
To offer his young pinion as her fan.

Some Zephyr ✧ Zephyros was God of the west wind that the Greeks associated with calm and mild weather. He rescued Psyche (next verse) from death when her Father, fearful of misleading oracles about her children, had exposed the young girl on a cliff.

LXXIV

Round her she made an atmosphere of life,
The very air seemed lighter from her eyes,
They were so soft and beautiful, and rife
With all we can imagine of the skies,
And pure as Psyche ere she grew a wife—
Too pure even for the purest human ties;
Her overpowering presence made you feel
It would not be idolatry to kneel.

Pure as Psyche ✒ In the *Legend of the Golden Ass* (about 150 CE), Lucius Apuleius, re-tells at length an older tale about the beautiful mortal girl Psyche — meaning "soul" or "life's breath", also a butterfly — whom the God of Love, Cupid, takes to his bed on the condition that she not try to discover his identity. She takes a peek one night while he is sleeping but the hot oil from her lamp falls on Cupid and wakes him. After many trials and dangers imposed by the jealous enmity of Cupid's mother, Venus, the Boy god rescues her and Psyche joins the immortals. The stories of Haidée and Psyche have several parallels. But the Greek legend is, ultimately, a comedy because — as Byron explains earlier in the Canto — it ends with the marriage of Psyche and Cupid. Haidée's story is a tragedy. There are two points in this Canto at which Byron makes idolatry out of the worship of feminine beauty; here, in describing Haidée and in the curious hymn to the Virgin Mary near the end. The painting is by Simon Vouet, early 17th century.

LXXV

Her eyelashes, though dark as night, were tinged (It is the
country's custom), but in vain,
For those large black eyes were so blackly fringed,
The glossy rebels mocked the jetty stain,
And in their native beauty stood avenged:
Her nails were touched with henna; but, again,
The power of Art was turned to nothing, for
They could not look more rosy than before.

LXXVI

The henna should be deeply dyed to make
The skin relieved appear more fairly fair;
She had no need of this, day ne'er will break
On mountain tops more heavenly white than her:
The eye might doubt if it were well awake,
She was so like a vision; I might err,
But Shakespeare also says, 't is very silly
"To gild refinéd gold, or paint the lily."

Paint the lilly ✧ Nowadays, a much mis-quoted phrase:

> To gild refinéd gold, to paint the lily,
> To throw a perfume on the violet,
> To smooth the ice, or add another hue
> Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
> To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
> Is wasteful and ridiculous excess…

From Shakespeare's *King John*, Act IV.2

LXXVII

Juan had on a shawl of black and gold,
But a white baracan, and so transparent
The sparkling gems beneath you might behold,
Like small stars through the milky way apparent;
His turban, furled in many a graceful fold,
An emerald aigrette, with Haidée's hair in 't,
Surmounted as its clasp—a glowing crescent,
Whose rays shone ever trembling, but incessant.

Emerald aigrete ✧ Byron's syntax is just as 'furled' as the turban. An "aigrette" is a clasp, often jewelled, containing a spray of feathers from the egret (a white heron) that was part of the uniform of some French army officers. Here, the aigrette, in the form of a crescent studded with emeralds and containing a spray of Haidée's hair, surmounts the turban as its clasp.

LXXVIII

And now they were diverted by their suite,
Dwarfs, dancing girls, black eunuchs, and a poet,
Which made their new establishment complete;
The last was of great fame, and liked to show it;
His verses rarely wanted their due feet—
And for his theme—he seldom sung below it,
He being paid to satirise or flatter,
As the Psalm says, "inditing a good matter."

Their due feet ✧ A "foot" is a measure of verse. Byron means that his poetry was metrically correct.

As the Psalm says ✧ Psalm 45: "My heart is inciting a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King…"

` *He praised the present …*

LXXIX

He praised the present, and abused the past,
Reversing the good custom of old days,
An Eastern anti-jacobin at last
He turned, preferring pudding to *no* praise—
For some few years his lot had been o'ercast
By his seeming independent in his lays,
But now he sung the Sultan and the Pacha—
With truth like Southey, and with verse like Crashaw.

Pudding to no praise ✧ Alexander Pope, a Byronic favourite, contrasts the rewards of "pudding or praise" — money or fame — in the Dunciad. Byron means that a steadfast liberal, like himself, who chose not to praise the establishment got *neither*.

Crashaw ✧ Richard Crashaw (d. 1649) wrote ardent religious verse in a rococo style containing some bizarre imagery. Byron may not have read much of him but, like Dr Johnson, disliked the metaphysical poets.

Eastern anti-jacobin ✒ Byron makes fun of the poet's lack of conviction; at first he had favored radical ("Jacobin") political opinions but then, for the sake of money, he turned to praising Greece's oppressive rulers (the Ottoman Turks), for money. Byron is suggesting the Poet is a mirror of Robert Southey who published radical verse while young but later took the "King's shilling" to be Poet Laureate of England and a favorite of the Tories. In this performance at Haidée's feast, the Poet — unlike Southey — tries to make up for his earlier apostasy by reverting to the opinions he held in his "warm youth".

Still, considering what we know already of Lambro's sympathies, he takes little risk by urging revolt.

The Jacobins were a French political club of — at first, before the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy in 1792 — deputies and moderate reformers so-called because they met at a former Dominican convent on the Rue St-Honoré in Paris. The Dominican order were known as "Jacobin" friars in Paris because they were first located in the Rue St Jacques near where the Sorbonne is now located. At one time or another, most of the famous names Byron invokes in the first verse of Canto I (Barnave, Mirabeau, Brissot, Condorcet, Pétion) were associated with the Jacobin club. The Club's name was later, permanently attached to the murderous, radical faction (the "Montagnards") of Robespierre.

Byron was no democrat or admirer of English radicals such as Tom Paine (associated with the Jacobins) or Richard Cobbett. But he despised the restoration of the oppressive, corrupt *anciens régimes* of Europe by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 at the instigation of the Tory governments of England and of Castlereagh as its Foreign Minister.

LXXX

He was a man who had seen many changes,
And always changed as true as any needle;
His Polar Star being one which rather ranges,
And not the fixed—he knew the way to wheedle:
So vile he 'scaped the doom which oft avenges;
And being fluent (save indeed when fee'd ill),
He lied with such a fervour of intention—
There was no doubt he earned his laureate pension.

Needle ✧ A compass needle, which is always wavering and changing direction as the wind turns the prow of the boat.

LXXXI

But *he* had genius,—when a turncoat has it,
The *Vates irritabilis* takes care
That without notice few full moons shall pass it;
Even good men like to make the public stare:—
But to my subject—let me see—what was it?—
Oh!—the third canto—and the pretty pair—
Their loves, and feasts, and house, and dress, and mode
Of living in their insular abode.

Vates irritabilis ✧ Roughly,"poetic *mania*". "Vates" is a Latin word, possibly borrowed from Celtic, for a divinely inspired bard; perhaps, as Byron hints, a *loony*.

LXXXII

Their poet, a sad trimmer, but, no less,
In company a very pleasant fellow,
Had been the favourite of full many a mess
Of men, and made them speeches when half mellow;
And though his meaning they could rarely guess,
Yet still they deigned to hiccup or to bellow
The glorious meed of popular applause,
Of which the First ne'er knows the second Cause.

A trimmer ✧ *Either*: (i) someone who adjusts the balance of the cargo or sails of a ship to set it evenly in the water; hence someone who sails a middling course; *or*, possibly (ii) a milliner's assistant (Byron jokingly, inaccurately, claims Southey and Coleridge married sisters who were milliners, below).

First. . . second cause ✧ They applaud what they don't understand and without thought to the consequences. Aristotle's *First Cause* was the creator of the Universe and secondary causes were any derived from or dependent on the First.

LXXXIII

But now being lifted into high society,
And having picked up several odds and ends
Of free thoughts in his travels for variety,
He deemed, being in a lone isle, among friends,
That, without any danger of a riot, he
Might for long lying make himself amends;
And, singing as he sung in his warm youth,
Agree to a short armistice with Truth.

LXXXIV

He had travelled 'mongst the Arabs, Turks, and Franks,
And knew the self-loves of the different nations;
And having lived with people of all ranks,
Had something ready upon most occasions—
Which got him a few presents and some thanks.
He varied with some skill his adulations;
To "do at Rome as Romans do," a piece
Of conduct was which *he* observed in Greece.

Franks ✧ In the East, since the time of the Crusades, all Western European had been called Franks.

LXXXV

Thus, usually, when *he* was asked to sing,
He gave the different nations something national;
'T was all the same to him—"God save the King,"
Or "Ça ira," according to the fashion all:
His Muse made increment of anything,
From the high lyric down to the low rational;
If Pindar sang horse-races, what should hinder
Himself from being as pliable as Pindar?

Ça ira ✧ A French revolutionary hymn, quite the contrary of the British anthem that lauds the monarch. "Ça ira" had it's origins in a remark of Benjamin Franklin, then the representative of the United States in France who, whenever asked about the likely success of the former colonies' revolt, is said to have replied: "Ça ira" — "it will work!".

Pindar ✧ Said to have been the greatest of the Greek lyricsts, Pindar (522-443 BCE) wrote occasional poetry such as odes praising the winners in the Olympic competitions. The first of these celebrated Hieron of Syracuse who won the chariot races in 476.

LXXXVI

In France, for instance, he would write a chanson;
In England a six canto quarto tale;
In Spain he'd make a ballad or romance on
The last war—much the same in Portugal;
In Germany, the Pegasus he'd prance on
Would be old Goethe's—(see what says De Staël);
In Italy he'd ape the "Trecentisti;"
In Greece, he'd sing some sort of hymn like this t' ye:

The Isles of Greece *These sixteen lyrical stanzas have been widely reprinted by anthologists looking for a self-contained "capsule" of* **Don⚔Juan**. *As a result, although they are not in* ottava rima *and are a digression from the narrative, they are probably the most widely known verses from the poem. Despite using the character of the "trimmer" Poet to attack Southey, this song is transparently Byron's own call to the Greeks to honour their history and to rise up against their Turkish conquerors. It's a surprising twist in the tale. So far, Byron's "unplanned" epic had been farcical, naughty, adventurous, opinionated, but never quite serious. Now, in an unexpected place and form, Byron introduces a new element: contemporary geo-politics and a popular revolution whose cause he would eventually make his own. The uprising the Poet urges began just 18 months after Byron wrote these verses. Within six years, he died in its cause, despairing that it would succeed.*

I

The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of War and Peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their Sun, is set.

2

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The Hero's harp, the Lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse:
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your Sires' "Islands of the Blest."

Six canto quarto ✧ A quarto was a largish book, one quarter of the area of the full sheet on which 8 pages, back-to-back, were printed. A six-canto quarto probably refers to Southey's epics.

The last war ✧ The Peninsular War (1808-14) pitted Spanish and Portuguese guerillas, with British aid, against Napoleon.

Pegasus ✧ A divine, winged horse said to have created the Hippocrene fountain on Mt. Helicon, sacred to the Muses.

De Staël ✧ Mme. Germaine de Staël-Holstein (1766-1817), the doyenne of "bluestockings" who presided over a brilliant intellectual and literary circle. Byron first met her during her much-celebrated visit to England in 1813; in his journal he records that he had read her books and liked most of them. But "this same lady writes octavos and talks folios." She became a correspondent, a loyal friend and a defender of Byron after his separation. He visited her often at her Château in Coppet near Geneva in 1816 (Byron was then living in Geneva). In her book "On Germany" (1810) she heaped praise on Goethe — still alive but elderly when Byron wrote Canto III — saying he could embody all of German literature.

The Trecentisti The famous poets of the 13th century. From the right in Gorgio Vasari's painting: Guido Cavalcanti, Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio (actually, 14th century) and Francesco Petrarca. On the far left are the (15th century) humanist and man of letters Marsilio Ficino and the platonic philosopher Cristoforo Landino

Burning Sappho ✧ Sappho's intense love poetry was written on the island of Lesbos

3

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

4

A King sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And, when the Sun set, where were they?

5

And where are they? and where art thou,
My Country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy Lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

6

'T is something, in the dearth of Fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

7

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?
Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylæ!

Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung ✧ The island of Delos was the birthplace of Apollo, the god of youth, poetry and song and of his twin sister Artemis the goddess of the hunt. Zeus, the father of the twins, had hidden the floating island from his jealous wife Hera under a dome of water, while his lover, the Titaness Leto, gave birth. He afterwards anchored the island to the sea-bed and revealed it so that it seemed to 'spring' from the waves.

Except their Sun ✧ Apollo ("Phoebus") is the god of the sun and his sister Artemis ("Phoebe") of the moon. Byron means that contemporary Greece had no more to boast of than its mythic past. The Ottoman empire of Turkey had now imposed its harsh rule on Greece for four hundred years. Although there were sporadic, local revolts by the Greeks, only the Venetians had troubled the Turkish rule as they asserted their maritime power in the Adriatic and — for a time — their occupation of the Ionian islands.

Scian and Teian muses ✧ The Scian muse — the poet born on the island of Chios — is Homer. The poet born at Teos on the coast of Ionia (Asia Minor) was Anacreon (about 500 BCE), a lyric poet, one of Byron's favorites and a model for this song. Anacreontic verse had the same rhythm as this song but comprised stanzas of four, alternately rhymed, lines.

Islands of the Blest ✧ The mythical home of Greek heroes who lived in eternal bliss after death rather than in the 'second tier' netherworld of Hades, across the river Lethe. The Islands were supposedly located in the far-western part of the world-encircling stream, Okeanos; perhaps beyond the Pillars of Hercules in the Atlantic.

Marathon ✧ A plain some 40km north of Athens where an army from the Greek city-states of Athens and Plataea blocked, and then defeated a Persian invading force of twice as many in 490 BCE. The momentous victory was due, in part, to the bronze-armoured Athenian phalanxes in close formation crashing through the lines of the lightly-armoured Persian bowmen. Marathon consolidated Athens' sense of its own significance and emboldened it to repel the much larger Persian invasions that followed.

Salamis ✧ A decade after the failure of Darius' expedition against Greece in 490, his successor Xerxes made a more determined attempt that culminated in a spectacular naval battle in the straits of Salamis in which his navy of perhaps 500 triremes— comprising fleets from dozen allied or client kingdoms — were crushed by a much smaller Greek fleet in 480 BCE. The historian Herodotus tells us that Xerxes sat on the hill overlooking the straits to survey his vast fleet on the morning of the battle.

8

What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, "Let one living head,
But one arise,—we come, we come!"
'T is but the living who are dumb.

9

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;
Fill high the cup with Samian wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
And shed the blood of Scio's vine!
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal!

10

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?

11

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's song divine:
He served—but served Polycrates—
A Tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.

12

The Tyrant of the Chersonese
Was Freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades!
Oh! that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

Persian archers ✒ From the palace of Darius at Susa.

Thermopylæ ✧ A legendary battle in a mountain pass near the sea in northern Greece where a small Greek force of about 6-7,000 tried to stop Xerxes' invading Persian army of 80,000 in 480 BCE. The Greeks held their position for a few days but were betrayed by a local who showed the Persian king a way around the pass. The Spartan commander of the Greeks, their king Leonidas, sent most of his force back to their homes to fight another day while he and a smaller force of 1-2,000 men – including some 300 Spartan hoplites — fought to their deaths to hold the pass; in vain.

The voices of the dead ✧ The voices speak from the ancient tombstones and memorial stelæ of Greece. Here are the voices of the Spartan dead at Themopylæ, as recorded in an epitaph by Simonides:

> "Go tell the Spartans, you who passeth by,
> That here, obedient to their laws, we lie."

Bacchanal ✧ A devotee of Bacchus – the *Roman* name for the Greek god Dionysus – hence a drunk.

Pyrrhic phalanx ✒ The close-order formation of armed hoplites that allowed the Spartan Greeks to triumph over the lightly-armed archers of the Persian invasions.

13

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood might own.

14

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells;
In native swords, and native ranks,
The only hope of courage dwells;
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,
Would break your shield, however broad.

15

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

16

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

The letters Cadmus gave ✧ Herodotus says the mythical founder of Thebes, son of a Phoenician king, introduced the earliest writing — from thePhoenician alphabet — to Greece. Cadmus killed the dragon from whose teeth, when planted, sprang fully-armed men: the *Spartoi*. In classical times, the joint kings of Sparta claimed to be the descendants of Cadmus.

Polycrates ✧ He seized power in Samos in the mid-6th century BCE, making its navy, for a while, the greatest in the Aegean. He was a patron of arts and learning.

Tyrant of the Chersonese ✧ Before the Athenians began to propagandise on behalf of their democratic government, a 'tyrant' meant simply a 'master'; a leader who sized power rather than inherited it. It was not necessarily a pejorative term. Miltiades set himself up as the ruler of the Greek colonies of the Thracian Chersonese — the peninsula we now call Gallipoli — in about 520 BCE. He struggled with the expanding Persian empire under Darius and lost. For a while he joined the Darius' armies as a client ruler. But he fell out with his new masters and joined a revolt of the Ionian (Greek) colonies against the Persians in 490 BCE. When the revolt failed, Miltiades retreated to Athens where he assumed command of the Athenian forces that repelled Darius' invasion at the battle of Marathon.

Suli's rock, and Parga's shore ✧ Suli is a mountainous region in North Western Greece not far from Ioannina, the city in north western Greece that became the centre of Ali Pasha's territory after 1789. Parga a is town on the Western coast — opposite Corfu. The Souliotes — Albanian speakers like Ali Pasha — were fierce opponents of the Ottoman rule. Ali put down their revolt in 1803 and scattered them to other parts of Greece. Several of the leaders of the *Filiki Eteria* that fostered the Greek uprising in 1821 came from these places. Some of them were former officers of Ali Pasha's army.

Doric ✧ The Spartans were the most renowned descendants of the speakers of the Doric dialect of Greek who had invaded the from the north in about 1100 BCE. The Dorian society was less sophisticated than the bronze-age Achaean/Mycenaean civilisations that then occupied the peninsula, but they possessed weapons of iron.

Heracleidan blood ✧ The Spartans, like other Dorians, claimed to be descendants of Heracles ("Hercules" to the Romans).

Trust not for freedom to the Franks ✧ In 1819 as Bryon wrote this Canto, the British Whigs and the liberal journals were angered by their government's decision to cede Parga to Ali Pasha. But, in the end, the "Franks" came to the rescue of the internecine rebel groups who rose up against the Turkish occupation in 1821. Public opinion in Europe was aroused by the ferocity of the Turkish-Egyptian repression of the revolt; the Turks had massacred almost the whole population of Chios (Scio), for example, in 1822. For this — and other more strategic reasons — the French and British navies joined with the Russian Imperial fleet to annihilate the Turkish and Egyptian fleets at the battle of Navarino (in the western Ionian Sea) in October, 1827. After two further military interventions, by France and Russia, the Ottoman Turks finally agreed to withdraw from Greece.

LXXXVII

Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in these times he might have done much worse:
His strain displayed some feeling—right or wrong;
And feeling, in a poet, is the source
Of others' feeling; but they are such liars,
And take all colours—like the hands of dyers.

LXXXVIII

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;
'T is strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces
Frail man, when paper—even a rag like this,
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his!

LXXXIX

And when his bones are dust, his grave a blank,
His station, generation, even his nation,
Become a thing, or nothing, save to rank
In chronological commemoration,
Some dull MS. Oblivion long has sank,
Or graven stone found in a barrack's station
In digging the foundation of a closet,
May turn his name up, as a rare deposit.

XC

And Glory long has made the sages smile;
'T is something, nothing, words, illusion, wind—
Depending more upon the historian's style
Than on the name a person leaves behind:
Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle:
The present century was growing blind
To the great Marlborough's skill in giving knocks,
Until his late Life by Archdeacon Coxe.

Sunium ✧ A cliff on the promontory at the tip of the Attic peninsula near Athens that Byron visited in January 1810 on his tour of Greece with Hobhouse. There, from the remains of a temple of Poisidon, the young Bryon gazed out toward the Cyclades: the "Isles of Greece".

Swan-like ✧ Swans, of course, never sing; living or dying. ***Don⚔Juan*** is, however, Byron's 'swan song'.

Orpheus ✧ A legendary king of Thrace whose playing and singing tamed wild animals and charmed even rocks and trees.

The hands of dyers ✧ A reference to Shakespeare's sonnet 111, in which, self-deprecating, he compares the impact on him of his writing to that of a humbler trade that also marks the tradesman. Byron makes yet another gesture intended to distance himself from the passionate appeals of the Poet. He suggests his indifference to the lyric and even offers doubts about the value of poetry. Then, to confuse the matter further, he reminds us that fame is the creation of authors, not of heroes.

Words are things ✧ Byron attributes this phrase, that he also uses in other poems and plays, to the Comte de Mirabeau; a political moderate and a considerable orator in the early years of the French Revolution, whom he admired. Scholars have not been able to confirm its origin; but it is significant for Byron. It is, as he claims here, a vindication of the power of authors to shape history. Still, from about this time (1820) his political interests, in concert with Shelley's, turned more and more to deeds and less to words. Eventually, when he left Italy to join the Greek revolution in June 1823, he left words — the unfinished ***Don⚔Juan***, and *almost* all poetry — behind.

Closet... deposit ✧ A scatological joke? Byron's publisher, John Murray, must have missed it.

Homer... Hoyle ✧ Edmond Hoyle wrote a pamphlet on rules of whist: a card game that is the precursor of Bridge. *A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist* (1742) became a standard text whose reputation is still reflected in the epithet "According to Hoyle..". Of course, Byron's comparison of the roles of Hoyle who "immortalized" Whist and Homer who immortalized Troy is very silly.

XCI

Milton's the Prince of poets—so we say;
A little heavy, but no less divine:
An independent being in his day—
Learned, pious, temperate in love and wine;
But, his life falling into Johnson's way,
We're told this great High Priest of all the Nine
Was whipped at college—a harsh sire—odd spouse,
For the first Mrs. Milton left his house.

XCII

All these are, *certes*, entertaining facts,
Like Shakespeare's stealing deer, Lord Bacon's bribes;
Like Titus' youth, and Cæsar's earliest acts;
Like Burns (whom Doctor Currie well describes);
Like Cromwell's pranks;—but although Truth exacts
These amiable descriptions from the scribes,
As most essential to their Hero's story,
They do not much contribute to his glory.

Marlborough ✧ John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough, was possibly England's greatest general; he successfully led English and Dutch forces against France and Bavaria through the increasingly bloody "War of Spanish Succession" in the first decade of the 18th century, winning at Blenheim (1704) the greatest English victory between Agincourt and Waterloo. He was also a skilful diplomat. But he had a long history of playing both sides in the Hanoverian accession to the throne of England (the "Glorious Revolution") and, although loyal to William III and his successor Anne I (the last Stuart monarch) he was dismissed in disgrace by Queen Anne over alleged "embezzlement" of campaign funds. William IV restored his military posts after Anne's death, but his reputation took longer to recover. Southey mocked his victories in his poem *Battle of Blenheim* ("... but it was a famous victory"). Coxe was an amateur historian whose biography of Marlborough was published just a year before Byron wrote Canto III. The battle over Churchill's character and historical importance continued through the century, however. Thomas Macaulay savaged him in his histories in the 1840s; to which his descendent Winston Churchill responded with 4-volumes of praise in *Marlborough: His Life and Times* in the 1930s.

Falling into Johnson's way ✧ Dr. Sam. Johnson, in his *Lives of the Poets*, took a dyspeptic view of Milton because of the poet's dissent in politics as in religion. Like Byron, however, Johnson admired Milton's epic poems and praised them without reservation.

Entertaining facts ✧ More scandal than facts. There's no evidence that the young Shakespeare fled to London in 1585 because he was caught poaching deer on an estate near Stratford. Francis Bacon acknowledged to a Parliamentary inquiry that he took "gifts" when a judge. He was stripped of his office of Lord Chancellor in 1621 and retired in disgrace. Titus has often been described as the most benevolent of Roman Emperors (79-81 CE) but the muck-raking historian Suetonius claims he played up when young (surprise!). Caesar accepted an official mission to Bithynia — on the southern shores of the Black sea — when young. There, he was said to have struck up a relationship with its notoriously queer ruler Nicomedes III. Caesar's enemies, in later life, would refer to him as "The Queen of Bithynia". There's no evidence and Caesar denied the allegation. Still, according to Suetonius his soldiers chuffed him in a triumphal chant: "Caesar conquered the Gauls, but Nicomedes conquered Caesar." (Yes, ancient history is *just* like a Monty Python movie). James Currie published a collection of Robert Burns' poems in 1800 and a life of the poet in which he may have exaggerated Burns' drinking habits.

Southey. . . Wordsworth ✒ *Byron wrote verses XCIII–XCV before the publication of Cantos I and II on 15 July, 1819. At the time he did not expect his — hilarious, scurrilous — "*Dedication*" of the entire poem to Southey would be published. His friends in England and his publisher Murray urged him to cut it. So these verses contain the same sentiments as the Dedication, expressed with less vigor.*

` *All are not moralists. . .*

XCIII

All are not moralists, like Southey, when
He prated to the world of "Pantisocracy;"
Or Wordsworth unexcised, unhired, who then
Seasoned his pedlar poems with Democracy;
Or Coleridge long before his flighty pen
Let to the Morning Post its aristocracy;
When he and Southey, following the same path,
Espoused two partners (milliners of Bath).

XCIV

Such names at present cut a convict figure,
The very Botany Bay in moral geography;
Their loyal treason, renegado rigour,
Are good manure for their more bare biography;
Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger
Than any since the birthday of typography;
A drowsy, frowzy poem, called the "Excursion,"
Writ in a manner which is my aversion.

XCV

He there builds up a formidable dyke
Between his own and others' intellect;
But Wordsworth's poem, and his followers, like
Joanna Southcote's Shiloh and her sect,
Are things which in this century don't strike
The public mind,—so few are the elect;
And the new births of both their stale Virginities
Have proved but Dropsies, taken for Divinities.

XCVI

But let me to my story: I must own,
If I have any fault, it is digression,
Leaving my people to proceed alone,
While I soliloquize beyond expression:
But these are my addresses from the throne,
Which put off business to the ensuing session:
Forgetting each omission is a loss to
The world, not quite so great as Ariosto.

Milliners of Bath ✧ A slander; implying, according to a popular prejudice, that the sisters were good-time girls. They were, in fact well-educated, talented, young middle-class women who, after their father's bankruptcy and early death, lost their entrée into the fashionable society of Bristol and Bath. They took up work as seamstresses, with wealthy relatives and friends including Robert Southey's strange mother, Margaret. In 1795, Southey and Coleridge were planning their utopian "Pantisocratic" community in Pennsylvania on land purchased for the purpose by Joseph Priestly (a dissenting theologian renowned today as the first chemist to isolate oxygen and to describe the process of photosynthesis). The colonists were to be married couples. Southey wanted to marry Edith Fricker and convinced Coleridge to honour an impetuous promise to marry her sister Sarah, then just twenty-five. Four years later Coleridge fell in love with Sarah Hutchinson, the sister of Wordsworth's future wife. He separated from Sarah in 1806 and thereafter abandoned her and her son to the care of the Southeys, alienating both Southey and Wordsworth by this disgraceful behavior.

Botany Bay ✧ A mud-filled inlet on the coast of New South Wales just south of Sydney. In 1788 the British government attempted to establish a convict colony there; the first European settlement on the continent. The colony's naval commander, on arrival, immediately abandoned the location for small cove in the much larger harbour — now Sydney Harbour — just a few miles north that Cook had not explored. But the association of "Botany Bay" and convicts had already become a trope of popular literature. Southey wrote a series of poems collected as *Botany Bay Ecologues* in 1794 protesting conditions in the penal settlement, although it is evident he had little knowledge of the actual conditions.

Joanna Southcote' Shiloh ✧ A deranged former servant and self-styled "prophet" who claimed to be the woman described in the book of Revelations (12:1) whose son would "rule all nations with a rod of iron." She started taking money from people wishing to be "sealed" among the Elect of this end-of-days reign and at the age of 64 declared she would give birth to her child on 19 October, 1814. His name would be Shiloh: a mistranslated word from the story of Jacob and Judah in Genesis (49:10) that has been taken to be a reference to the Messiah. Joanna apparently had an œdema that many tens of thousands of her deluded followers took for a pregnancy. She died of a brain disorder in December of 1814. In an 1815 letter to Leigh Hunt, Byron had called Wordsworth an "Arch-Apostle of mystery & mysticism" (referring to *The Excursion*), of whom he said, Southcote was a mere reflection.

Addresses from the throne ✧ The Monarch's address to the joint houses of Parliament at the start of a government's term — made from the Speaker's chair in the lower house — is an often-dull recitation of the legislative program, scripted by the government. Typically the Parliament rises after the ceremony and business begins only when it resumes.

XCVII

I know that what our neighbours call *"longueurs,"*
(We've not so good a *word*, but have the *thing*,
In that complete perfection which insures
An epic from Bob Southey every spring—)
Form not the true temptation which allures
The reader; but 't would not be hard to bring
Some fine examples of the *Epopée*,
To prove its grand ingredient is *Ennui*.

XCVIII

We learn from Horace, "Homer sometimes sleeps;"
We feel without him,—Wordsworth sometimes wakes,—
To show with what complacency he creeps,
With his dear "*Waggoners*," around his lakes.
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps—
Of Ocean?—No, of air; and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
And drivels seas to set it well afloat.

XCIX

If he must fain sweep o'er the ethereal plain,
And Pegasus runs restive in his "Waggon,"
Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?
Or pray Medea for a single dragon?
Or if, too classic for his vulgar brain,
He feared his neck to venture such a nag on,
And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

C

"Pedlars," and "Boats," and "Waggons!" Oh! ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss
Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades
Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—
The "little boatman" and his *Peter Bell*
Can sneer at him who drew "Achitophel!"

Arisoto ✧ Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) Italian poet, author of *Orlando Furioso* ("Roland Enraged"); a monumental Italian epic tale —almost 40,000 lines in *ottava rima* verses — about the hero of the battles of Charlemagne against the Moors, who is driven mad by his frustrated love for the North African princess, Angelica. Byron admired Ariosto, whose work had a vast influence on European literature. But ***Don⚔Juan*** is much closer in tone to the earlier *ottava rima* of Luigi Pulci's parody epic *Morgante*, also associated with the tales of Roland.

Longeurs ✧ The tedious parts, whether or not in an epic (*epopée*), that lead to boredom (*ennui*). Words and things again.

Homer sometimes sleeps ✧ Byron turns a reference to a proverbial line from Horace's *The Art of Poetry* ("I, too, am annoyed whenever the worthy Homer nods off...") conceding that even the greatest poets sometimes err, into a clever jeer at Wordsworth.

Waggoners ✧ Wordsworth's long poems about North Country itinerants, *The Waggoner* (850 lines) and *Peter Bell* (1100 lines) appeared, after much revision, in 1819. They were immediate critical failures, harshly criticized in the liberal journals, such as Leigh Hunt's Examiner ("superlatively silly") for trivial ideas and mundane language. The "little boat" refers to the opening lines of Peter Bell where Wordsworth imagines the moon as a crescent boat floating in the clouds.

Charles' Wain ✧ The constellation of the Great Bear, Plough or "Big Dipper" has many names, one of which is "Charlemagne's waggon" (wain). Byron is suggesting Wordsworth put a little imaginative power into his tepid verse.

Medea's dragon ✧ In Euripedes' play *Medea*, the great sorceress of Greek legend rides through the air in a chariot drawn by dragons.

Achitophel ✧ Dryden's poem *Absalom and Achitophel* (1682) is a political satire modelled on the on pretensions of the (illegitimate but Protestant, handsome and popular) Duke of Monmouth to succeed his elderly father Charles II in place of the designated heir, his (Catholic) uncle James II. Byron admired Pope and Dryden as the epitome of English verse. For political as well as literary reasons he despised the rise of Southey and Wordsworth — who eventually succeeded Southey as Poet Laureate in 1843 — as a descent from the sublime to the trite and mundane ("bathos"). Jack Cade led an anarchic revolt in 1450 that, for a time occupied London and imposed mob-rule. Wordsworth had publicly criticized Dryden's translations of Virgil and privately shown little taste for Dryden's rhetorical style that he contrasted with his own preference for the psychological and introspective, or as he called it: "passionate".

CI

T' our tale.—The feast was over, the slaves gone,
The dwarfs and dancing girls had all retired;
The Arab lore and Poet's song were done,
And every sound of revelry expired;
The lady and her lover, left alone,
The rosy flood of Twilight's sky admired;—
Ave Maria! o'er the earth and sea,
That heavenliest hour of Heaven is worthiest thee!

CII

Ave Maria! blesséd be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth—so beautiful and soft—
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

CIII

Ave Maria! 't is the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 't is the hour of Love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove—
What though 't is but a pictured image?—strike—
That painting is no idol,—'t is too like.

CIV

Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,
In nameless print—that I have no devotion;
But set those persons down with me to pray,
And you shall see who has the properest notion
Of getting into Heaven the shortest way;
My altars are the mountains and the Ocean,
Earth, air, stars—all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the Soul.

Ave Maria ✧ "Hail Mary"; a popular Catholic prayer. Byron acknowledges in his letters a taste for the "tangible" character of Catholic liturgy and practices. Still, that doesn't explain this odd, wistful, 3-verse diversion into apparent Mariolatry. In fact the "devotion" here is not to Mary, to her Son or the "Almighty Dove" (an image of the Holy Ghost), but to the mysterious quiet of the twilight. It has more in common with the pantheism of Coleridge, Shelley and even Wordsworth than with Christianity.

` *Sweet hour of twilight*

Dryden's lay ✒ *Theodore and Honoria* is John Dryden's masterly rendering of a bizzare 'gothic' tale that, in Boccacio's Decameron, is told by Nastagio degli Onesti. In the story, Theodore is a young noble from Ravenna whose suit has been spurned by Honoria. Wandering in the pine woods near Ravenna — where Byron was in the habit of riding most days — he has a nightmarish vision: the spectre of his ancestor, the suicide Guido Cavalcanti, mounted on a hell-steed, pursuing a woman who spurned him. She stumbles as she runs and Guido's dogs tear her to bits. But, miraculously, she recovers, rises to her feet and flees again into the woods, again pursued by the dogs and Guido — eternally — in punishment of her "cruelty." In Onesti's story, Theodore invites Honoria and her family to a feast in the woods where they, too, witness the spectacle. Honoria gets the message and accepts Theodore. The painting is by Johann Heinrich Fussli.

CV

Sweet Hour of Twilight!—in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,
To where the last Cæsarean fortress stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee!

CVI

The shrill cicalas, people of the pine,
Making their summer lives one ceaseless song,
Were the sole echoes, save my steed's and mine,
And Vesper bell's that rose the boughs along;
The spectre huntsman of Onesti's line,
His hell-dogs, and their chase, and the fair throng
Which learned from this example not to fly
From a true lover,—shadowed my mind's eye.

Ravenna ✧ Byron, having all but exhausted himself with libertine adventures during the Carnival in Venice, re-located about 150kms south to this smaller, walled city near the Adriatic coast in July of 1819, just a month or so before he began work on Canto III. He was following his new lover — the last woman with whom he had a lasting relationship — the Countess Teresa Guiccioli. He told his correspondents in England that he had always been attracted to the city. It was the burial place of Dante — who, exiled from Florence, lived there after there publication of the Divine Comedy (about 1317) — the home of Boccacio (briefly) and the home of Francesca da Rimini after her marriage to Gianciotto Malatesta. Her tragic love affair with her brother-in-law Paulo Malatesta — recounted by Dante in Canto V of the *Inferno* — had fascinated Byron since the time of his own incestuous affair with his half-sister Augusta Leigh. Ravenna was the last capital of the Roman empire in the West in the 5th century and the capital again a century later when the Eastern Empire, under Justinian, reconquered Italy. The silting of the sea-marshes where Ravenna once stood means that the mediæval city is now a little way inland.

Vesper's bell ✧ A bell rung to announce the evening (Latin: *vesperus*) prayers in the daily cycle of the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran liturgy.

CVII

Oh, Hesperus! thou bringest all good things—
Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
To the young bird the parent's brooding wings,
The welcome stall to the o'erlaboured steer;
Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
Are gathered round us by thy look of rest;
Thou bring'st the child, too, to the mother's breast.

Hesperus ✧ The Greek word for "west", but also the "evening star" (Venus) that shines in the West after sunset. This verse is Byron's imitation and expansion of a fragment of a verse by Sappho "Hesperus, you bring back all that the shining morning scattered; you bring the sheep, you bring the goat, you bring the child back to its mother." Catullus (in *Carmen 62*) also adapted this fragment, and Byron may have known both versions.

CVIII

Soft Hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
As the far bell of Vesper makes him start,
Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;
Is this a fancy which our reason scorns?
Ah! surely Nothing dies but Something mourns!

Soft hour ✧ This verse imitates the first six lines of the eighth canto of Dante's *Purgatorio* (Byron appends it in a note to the poem). Dante's verse reads:" It was now that hour which makes the thoughts, of those who voyage, turn back, and melts their hearts, on the day when they have said goodbye to their sweet friends; and which pierces the new pilgrim with love, when he hears the distant chimes, that seem to mourn the dying day..." (trans. A.S. Kline).

CIX

When Nero perished by the justest doom
Which ever the Destroyer yet destroyed,
Amidst the roar of liberated Rome,
Of nations freed, and the world overjoyed,
Some hands unseen strewed flowers upon his tomb:
Perhaps the weakness of a heart not void
Of feeling for some kindness done, when Power
Had left the wretch an uncorrupted hour.

Nero ✧ Nowadays Nero has a terrible reputation for debauchery and cruelty; partly because the historians Tacitus and Suetonius — writing 50 years later —- were bitter critics of the five early emperors' ascendency over the Senate, and partly because he reigned at the time of the Jewish revolt (66 CE) and the first persecutions of the Christians. But he was, in fact, popular with the lower classes in Rome and in the Provinces. He cut taxes and import duties on food. He spent his own money lavishly on reconstruction after the burning of Rome (64 CE) — there is no evidence he started it — and on popular entertainments. He suicided in 68 CE fearing he was about to be deposed. It is quite credible that there were many who mourned him. The story about the flowers on his tomb comes from Suetonius' *Life*: "For a long time after his death, his tomb was decorated with spring and summer flowers, and now his statues, draped in the toga praetexta, appeared on the Rostra..."

CX

But I'm digressing; what on earth has Nero,
Or any such like sovereign buffoons,
To do with the transactions of my hero,
More than such madmen's fellow man—the moon's?
Sure my invention must be down at zero,
And I grown one of many "Wooden Spoons"
Of verse, (the name with which we Cantabs please
To dub the last of honours in degrees).

Wooden spoons ✧ The students at Cambridge (Latin: *Cantabrigia*, hence "Cantabs") traditionally awarded these to the lowest of the Honors list in the Mathematics Tripos. Byron started at Cambridge in 1805 and was awarded an M.A. in 1808. However, he took no examinations and received the degree *honoris causa* as a nobleman. He had spent a good deal of that year raising Cain in London.

CXI

I feel this tediousness will never do—
T' is being *too* epic, and I must cut down
(In copying) this long canto into two;
They'll never find it out, unless I own
The fact, excepting some experienced few;
And then as an improvement 't will be shown:
I'll prove that such the opinion of the critic is
From Aristotle *passim*–See Ποιητικισ.

I must cut down ✧ Byron had promised, jokingly, at the end of Canto II that each of his Cantos would be about 200 verses, as the first two had been. In fact, he never reached that number again and later regretted the length of the first two. Here, he boasts that the shorter length will be shown to be an improvement based on "Aristotle's rules" in his book Poetics. He took his decision to divide the original Canto III into two Cantos when making his fair copy in February 1820, telling an old friend from Cambridge (William Bankes) that it was a mercenary decision. In fact he wrote around the same time to his publisher, John Murray — and confirmed to his literary agent, Douglas Kinnaird — that Murray was to count the two parts as only one for the purpose of payment. Byron's real motive for the division may simply have been that he recognized he had wandered away from the main narrative line — Lambro's confrontation with Juan and Haidée — some seventy verses earlier. The break allowed him to return, afresh, to the fray.

See Ποιητικισ ✧ Aristotle's Poetics (*poeticikes*) makes no such recommendation. We know Byron owned a translation, but ***PC*** suggests he hadn't read it.

Canto IV

Haidée on the island The image is John William Waterhouse's (1849–1917) "Miranda": a character from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, detained on an island with her father, Prospero, for almost twelve years. *Canto IV* is the tragic dénoument of the Juan & Haidée's romance.

Some selections from Canto III

The idyll continued: second Eden; "Thrice fortunate"; not meant to grow old; the language love; children they should have ever been; they fall asleep in each others' arms.	They were alone once more; for them to be / Thus was another Eden.	VIII–XX
Haidée dreams she finds Juan dead in a marble cave; his face transforms to Lambro's — she wakes.	She dreamed of being alone on the seashore, / Chained to a rock.	XXIX–XXXV
Haidée wakes to Lambro's fixed gaze, hysterical shriek; His crew besiege the pair; Juan grabs a sabre; Haidée throws herself before Lambro's gun.	'Tis—'tis her father's—fixed upon the pair!	XXXVI–XLII
Haidée's defiance; Juan overpowered: Lambro whistles up his men; Juan, floored, bound and borne to the galliots.	She stood as one who championed human fears.	XLIII–L
Haidée's collapses "like a cedar felled"; twelve days catatonic; a harp song unlocks memory then madness; dies without a groan; her unborn child with her;	For soon or late Love is his own avenger.	LVIII–LXXIII
On board the slave ship; Italian opera troupe sold by their own impresario; Raucocanti the buffo surveys his company in devastating insider gossip.	'You've heard of Raucocanti? I'm the man.'	LXXX–XC
Ravenna meditation: Byron scorns Murray's censorship; Gaston de Foix's broken pillar; Dante's tomb.	I've stood upon Achilles' tomb / And heard Troy doubted; time will doubt of Rome.	XCVII–CVI

"Di sopra vi contai questa novella,
Quando smotato Orlando da
cavallo
Chinossi a ber dell'onde
cristalline,
Credo che fu de l'altro libro al
fine."

Berni, *Orlando Innamorato*,
Libro Terzo, Canto 7, Stanza 14

Motto ✧ Byron places this quote from *Roland in Love* at the end of his fair copy of Cantos III and IV, which he composed as a single Canto but later split in two. It reads: *"I told you this story before, when Orlando got down from his horse, stooping to drink from the crystal waves — I think that was at the end of the other book."*

I

Nothing so difficult as a beginning
In poesy, unless perhaps the end;
For oftentimes when Pegasus seems winning
The race, he sprains a wing and down we tend,
Like Lucifer when hurled from heaven for sinning.
Our sin the same, and hard as his to mend,
Being pride, which leads the mind to soar too far,
. Till our own weakness shows us what we are.

Stanzas I to VII ✧ Byron added these additional stanzas after he decided to split his first draft of Canto III into two.

Lucifer ✧ The conventional *angelic* name of Satan. The attribution of a name that means "Lightbearer" in Latin — and the Roman name for Venus or the Morning-Star — to Satan may be due to a misinterpretation of a verse in Isiah (14:12), where the prophet is mocking Nebuchadnezzar II, the king of Babylon who destroyed Jerusalem and who thought he could aspire to the use of the epithet "hellel" i.e. "shining one". "*Hellel*" seems also to have been a Hebrew name for Venus, the Morning Star.

II

But time, which brings all beings to their level,
And sharp adversity will teach at last
Man and as we would hope, perhaps the devil
That neither of their intellects are vast.
While youth's hot wishes in our red veins revel,
We know not this-the blood flows on too fast;
But as the torrent widens towards the ocean,
We ponder deeply on each past emotion.

pride ✧ Lucifer's pride at being the brightest and most glorious of Angels is supposed to have led him to rebel against God, who cast him, literally, out of Heaven. He and his legions fell from the Empyrean to the sub-lunar, region of Hell where Jesus later did battle with him.

III

As boy, I thought myself a clever fellow
And wished that others held the same opinion;
They took it up when my days grew more mellow,
And other minds acknowledged my dominion.
Now my sere fancy 'falls into the yellow
Leaf', and imagination droops her pinion;
And the sad truth which hovers o'er my desk
Turns what was once romantic to burlesque.

'falls into the yellow / Leaf' ✧ A quote from the fifth act of *Macbeth* where the usurper morns the loss of honor, love and friends in his old age; metaphorically the autumn of life. "Sere" is an Old-English word meaning dried-up. It's worth remembering that Byron was only 30 when he wrote these lines. He sometimes complains of feeling that he has worn out his years by living too intensely.

IV

And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
'Tis that I may not weep; and if I weep,
'Tis that our nature cannot always bring
Itself to apathy, for we must steep
Our hearts first in the depths of Lethe's spring,
Ere what we least wish to behold will sleep.
Thetis baptized her mortal son in Styx;
A mortal mother would on Lethe fix.

V

Some have accused me of a strange design
Against the creed and morals of the land
And trace it in this poem every line.
I don't pretend that I quite understand
My own meaning when I would be very fine;
But the fact is that I have nothing planned,
Unless it were to be a moment merry,
A novel word in my vocabulary.

VI

To the kind reader of our sober clime
This way of writing will appear exotic.
Pulci was sire of the half-serious rhyme,
Who sang when Chivalry was more Quixotic,
And revelled in the fancies of the time-
True knights, chaste dames, huge giants, kings despotic.
But all these, save the last, being obsolete,
I chose a modern subject as more meet.

VII

How I have treated it, I do not know;
Perhaps no better than they have treated me
Who have imputed such designs as show
Not what they saw, but what they wished to see.
But if it gives them pleasure, be it so;
This is a liberal age, and thoughts are free.
Meantime Apollo plucks me by the ear
And tells me to resume my story here.

And if I laugh at any mortal thing... ✧ Now proverbial. It may be a translation from Act I of Pierre de Beaumarchais' libretto for *Le Mariage de Figaro*. But this is no doubt the original source in English

Lethe's spring ✧ Lethe was one of the rivers of Hades, the Greek underworld. Souls arriving there were forced to drink from the river. They instantly forgot everything of their mortal life.

Styx ✧ Another river of Hades. Thetis, a minor goddess and mother of the legendary hero of the Trojan War, Achilles (his father was Peleus, a Greek king), dipped her mortal child in the Styx so that his skin would be invulnerable to weapons. Unfortunately, she suspended the infant in the waters, holding him by his heel, leaving him with a weakness that proved fatal. Toward the end of the Trojan war, according to legend, the Trojan prince Paris shot Achilles in the heel with an arrow, killing him.

A strange design... ✧ The publication of the first two Cantos had caused a furore in London. The bedroom farce and 'blasphemy' of Canto I had offended the prudish and outraged the hypocritical Tory press while the cannibalism and 'connubial' activities of Juan and Haidée in Canto II engrossed the faults of Canto I. Naturally, this ensured the poem was immediately popular. Murray's expensive quarto edition sold well and the "radical" publishers were busy reproducing the anonymous, un-copyright, text in cheap editions. Byron steadfastly refused Murray's pleas to soften his satire or provide a plan for his proposed epic, saying that he had no plans; only some "materials".

Pulci was sire... ✧ Luigi Pulci was a 15th Century poet at the Florentine court of Lorenzo the Magnificent. His *Il Morgante Maggiore* was a masterly, literary burlesque of chivalric romance in *ottava rima* verse and epic scope. Byron admired the poem, which he took as a model for ***Don⚔Juan***— hence 'sire of half-serious verse' — translating the first canto of Pulci's poem into English *ottava rima* while writing Cantos III and IV of his own. Pulci was accused of 'heresy' (Byron escaped that charge) and refused a Christian burial after he died.

Quixotic ✧ A reference to Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605), the finest prose satire of chivalric romance; especially the tales of Roland (Orlando, in Puci's epic) and the conventions of true knights, chaste dames etc. The mock-chivalric adventures of Cervantes' crazy old man made the form seem ridiculous ever after. So Don Quixote became what he imagined himself to be: the last of the 'chivalric' heroes.

Apollo plucks me by the ear... ✧ Apollo is the god of poetry. These lines paraphrase part of the Sixth Ecologue of the Roman poet Virgil, who recounts Apollo's warning — grabbing him by the ear — that he should to stick to pastoral subjects ('fat sheep') rather than attempt ambitious tales of 'kings and battles'. Eventually, of course, Virgil succeeded in that ambition.

VIII

Young Juan and his ladylove were left
To their own hearts' most sweet society.
Even Time the pitiless in sorrow cleft
With his rude scythe such gentle bosoms. He
Sighed to behold them of their hours bereft,
Though foe to love. And yet they could not be
Meant to grow old, but die in happy spring,
. Before one charm or hope had taken wing.

IX

Their faces were not made for wrinkles, their
Pure blood to stagnate, their great hearts to fail.
The blank grey was not made to blast their hair,
But like the climes that know nor snow nor hail
They were all summer. Lightning might assail
And shiver them to ashes, but to trail
A long and snake-like life of dull decay
Was not for them-they had too little clay.

X

They were alone once more; for them to be
Thus was another Eden. They were never
. Weary, unless when separate. The tree
Cut from its forest root of years, the river
Dammed from its fountain, the child from the knee
And breast maternal weaned at once forever
Would wither less than these two torn apart.
Alas, there is no instinct like the heart-

XI

The heart-which may be broken. Happy they,
Thrice fortunate who of that fragile mould,
. The precious porcelain of human clay,
Break with the first fall. They can ne'er behold
The long year linked with heavy day on day
And all which must be borne and never told,
While life's strange principle will often lie
Deepest in those who long the most to die.

FOE TO LOVE ✧ Time is a 'foe to Love' as Love is a 'foe to Rest' in the first verse of Canto III. It's not entirely clear what Byron means by the idea; perhaps the same as Marvell meant when addressing his "*Coy Mistresse*"

NOT MEANT TO GROW OLD... ✧ The sentiment is ancient. A surviving scrap from the Greek playwright Menander (4th C. BCE) reads:: Ὅν οἱ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν, ἀποθνήσκει νέος (*hon hoi theoi philousin apothneskei neos*), that is "He whom the Gods love, dies young". The identical phrase was used by Plautus (3rd C. BCE: "Quem di dilugunt adulescens moritur") and an analogous verse by Byron in *Childe Harold* at **IV**.102: "Heaven gives its favorites—early death."

The conceit that an early death is somehow a boon to young lovers exaggerates youthful romantic *angst* in an uncomfortable way. Yet Byron won't let it go until he's wrung a few more sobs and sighs from it, especially in stanzas XI & XII below.

TOO LITTLE CLAY ✧ In Greek myth Prometheus shaped man from clay. In Genesis (**2**.7) God creates Man, in Eden, from a mixture of spirit/breath and dust/clay. The image continues below in stanza XI: "...the precious porcelain of human clay"

ANOTHER EDEN ✧ Byron continues the metaphor of Eden that he has employed since stanza № 89 of Canto II to describe the naïve absorption of Haidée and Juan in each other and to hint at the fragility of their innocent state; vulnerable to the interdiction of an intransigent father.

THRICE FORTUNATE ✧ '...*ter felices*', is an expression used by Virgil in the *Aeneid* I.95 to describe those who died in glory before the walls of Troy and by Horace in *Odes* I.13 to describe those who find an unbroken bond of love. Both of those uses are, however, more credible than this un-ironic praise of the "good" fortune of doomed young lovers.

XII

Whom the gods love ‘die young’ was said of yore,
. And many deaths do they escape by this:
The death of friends and that which slays even more,
The death of friendship, love, youth, all that is,
Except mere breath. And since the silent shore
Awaits at last even those whom longest miss
The old archer’s shafts, perhaps the early grave,
Which men weep over, may be meant to save.

DIE YOUNG ✧ See above, stanza VIII

XIII

Haidée and Juan thought not of the dead.
. The heavens and earth and air seemed made for them.
They found no fault with Time, save that he fled.
They saw not in themselves aught to condemn;
Each was the other’s mirror, and but read
Joy sparkling in their dark eyes like a gem,
And knew such brightness was but the reflection
Of their exchanging glances of affection.

THOUGHT NOT OF THE DEAD ✧ Nor should they…At last, Byron puts aside the gothic youthful-death-wish trope and attempts in the next 5-6 stanzas to craft a timeless idyll of pastoral romance. He had, certainly, the inspiration to do so. For he is drafting this Canto while in the early blissful stages of his romance with the Countess Guiccioli.

XIV

The gentle pressure and the thrilling touch,
The least glance better understood than words,
Which still said all and ne’er could say too much,
A language too, but like to that of birds,
. Known but to them, at least appearing such
As but to lovers a true sense affords,
Sweet playful phrases, which would seem absurd
To those who have ceased to hear such, or ne’er heard.

LIKE TO THAT OF BIRDS ✧ The language of birds is accounted in the myths of Greece, Persia and the books of Abraham as a divine, perfect language accessible only to augurs and mystics: Tiresias the Greek seer and Aesop the author of animal fables, for example. Solomon and David are both said to have understood the birds, as did Siegfried in Wagner’s Ring Cycle, after he tasted the blood of the dragon/giant Fafner.

XV

All these were theirs, for they were children still
And children still they should have ever been.
They were not made in the real world to fill
A busy character in the dull scene,
But like two beings born from out a rill,
A nymph and her belovèed, all unseen
To pass their lives in fountains and on flowers
And never know the weight of human hours.

XVI

Moons changing had rolled on, and changeless found
Those their bright rise had lighted to such joys
As rarely they beheld throughout their round.
And these were not of the vain kind which cloys,
For theirs were buoyant spirits, never bound
By the mere senses. And that which destroys
Most love, possession, unto them appeared
A thing which each endearment more endeared.

XVII

Oh beautiful and rare as beautiful!
. But theirs was love in which the mind delights
To lose itself, when the old world grows dull
And we are sick of its hack sounds and sights,
Intrigues, adventures of the common school,
Its petty passions, marriages, and flights,
Where Hymen's torch but brands one strumpet more,
. Whose husband only knows her not a whore.

rare as beautiful! ✧ Alhough Byron asserts the idyll of Juan and Haidée's romance, he can't quite sustain engagement with it. Both his own mercurial character and the inevitably-comic energy of *ottava rima* verse, with its clap-board final couplet, prevent his long immersion in the static world of pastoral bliss. His sceptical sense means he must sooner or later contrast the delights of their blissful true and natural love with the artificial "hack sounds and sights" of "common school" marriage and infidelity. Then, the shape of his verse and his skill as a versifier won't allow him to pass up the brutal swipe of the final couplet.

Hymen's torch ✧ A reference to the Roman rites of Marriage in which the bride—robed in a saffron veil—was conducted to the groom's house by a torch-lit procession. "Brand" is a pun: it can mean both a burning rush and a branding-iron (to "mark a strumpet"). Hymen is both the Greek god of Marriage and the virginal membrane.

XVIII

Hard words, harsh truth-a truth which many know.
Enough. The faithful and the fairy pair,
Who never found a single hour too slow,
What was it made them thus exempt from care?
Young innate feelings all have felt below,
Which perish in the rest, but in them were
Inherent; what we mortals call romantic
And always envy, though we deem it frantic.

XIX

This is in others a factitious state,
An opium dream of too much youth and reading,
. But was in them their nature or their fate.
No novels e'er had set their young hearts bleeding,
For Haidée's knowledge was by no means great,
And Juan was a boy of saintly breeding,
So that there was no reason for their loves
More than for those of nightingales or doves.

An opium dream ✧ Romance as a phoney convention; and addiction due to "too much youth and reading", and maybe to opium, too (a common analgesic in the 1820s). Not at all like the simple and sincere romance of Juan and Haidée, of course. These lines are usually taken as a reference to Keats whose verses Byron acidly described as "mental masturbation"; stimulated emotion. He was more charitable after Keats' death and praised the latter's poem *Hyperion* in an article for Blackwoods' Magazine.

XX

They gazed upon the sunset;'tis an hour
Dear unto all, but dearest to their eyes,
For it had made them what they were. The power
Of love had first o'erwhelmed them from such skies,
When happiness had been their only dower,
And twilight saw them linked in passion's ties.
Charmed with each other, all things charmed that brought
The past still welcome as the present thought.

XXI

I know not why, but in that hour tonight
. Even as they gazed, a sudden tremor came
And swept, as 'twere, across their heart's delight,
Like the wind o'er a harpstring or a flame,
When one is shook in sound, and one in sight;
And thus some boding flashed through either frame
And called from Juan's breast a faint low sigh,
While one new tear arose in Haidée's eye.

I know not why ✧ Of course he does. And since Canto III has already brought Lambro ashore on the island, we know why, too.

XXII

That large black prophet eye seemed to dilate
And follow far the disappearing sun,
As if their last day of a happy date
With his broad, bright, and dropping orb were gone.
Juan gazed on her as to ask his fate;
He felt a grief, but knowing cause for none,
His glance inquired of hers for some excuse
For feelings causeless, or at least abstruse.

XXIII

She turned to him and smiled, but in that sort
Which makes not others smile, then turned aside.
Whatever feeling shook her, it seemed short
And mastered by her wisdom or her pride.
When Juan spoke too-it might be in sport-
Of this their mutual feeling, she replied,
'If it should be so, but-it cannot be-
Or I at least shall not survive to see.'

XXIV

Juan would question further, but she pressed
His lip to hers and silenced him with this,
And then dismissed the omen from her breast,
Defying augury with that fond kiss.
And no doubt of all methods'tis the best;
Some people prefer wine-'tis not amiss.
I have tried both; so those who would a part take
May choose between the headache and the heartache.

XXV

One of the two, according to your choice,
Woman or wine, you'll have to undergo.
. Both maladies are taxes on our joys;
But which to choose, I really hardly know,
And if I had to give a casting voice,
For both sides I could many reasons show,
And then decide, without great wrong to either,
It were much better to have both than neither.

Woman or wine ✧ Byron here seems to assume a male audience for his poem (as ***PC*** notes on this line). He would have known better by the time he drafted this Canto but, in a poem where the author is so prominent, I suspect his female readers had no problem interpreting the sentiment.

XXVI

Juan and Haidée gazed upon each other
With swimming looks of speechless tenderness,
Which mixed all feelings, friend, child, lover, brother,
All that the best can mingle and express
When two pure hearts are poured in one another
And love too much and yet cannot love less,
But almost sanctify the sweet excess
By the immortal wish and power to bless.

XXVII

Mixed in each other's arms and heart in heart,
Why did they not then die? They had lived too long
Should an hour come to bid them breathe apart.
Years could but bring them cruel things or wrong;
The world was not for them, nor the world's art
For beings passionate as Sappho's song.
. Love was born with them, in them, so intense,
It was their very spirit–not a sense.

Sappho's song ✧ The Ode mentioned in Canto I

XXVIII

They should have lived together deep in woods,
    Unseen as sings the nightingale. They were
Unfit to mix in these thick solitudes
    Called social, haunts of hate and vice and care.
How lonely every freeborn creature broods!
    The sweetest songbirds nestle in a pair;
The eagle soars alone; the gull and crow
Flock o'er their carrion, just like men below.

XXIX

Now pillowed cheek to cheek in loving sleep,
    Haidée and Juan their siesta took,
A gentle slumber, but it was not deep,
    For ever and anon a something shook
Juan and shuddering o'er his frame would creep;
    And Haidée's sweet lips murmured like a brook
A wordless music, and her face so fair
Stirred with her dream as rose leaves with the air.

XXX

Or as the stirring of a deep clear stream
    Within an Alpine hollow when the wind
Walks o'er it, was she shaken by the dream,
    The mystical usurper of the mind,
O'erpowering us to be whate'er may seem
    Good to the soul which we no more can bind.
Strange state of being (for'tis still to be),
Senseless to feel and with sealed eyes to see!

XXXI

She dreamed of being alone on the seashore,
    Chained to a rock. She knew not how, but stir
She could not from the spot, and the loud roar
    Grew, and each wave rose roughly, threatening her,
And o'er her upper lip they seemed to pour,
    Until she sobbed for breath, and soon they were
Foaming o'er her lone head, so fierce and high
Each broke to drown her, yet she could not die.

Chained to a rock An echo of the myth of Andromeda, whom Poseidon ordered should be sacrificed to the sea-monster Cetus to punish her mother's pride in her daughter's beauty and her own. Perseus, who was most famous for killing the Gorgon Medusa happened to be flying by in his winged sandals (carrying Medusa's head!) when he saw Andromeda chained to a rock. He was struck by her beauty and instantly fell in love with her. Of course he defeated the sea-monster and he and Andromeda lived happily ever after and had lots of kids.
Haidée's Perseus does not rescue her from the sea-monster, alas! The painting is by Gustave Doré

XXXII

Anon she was released, and then she strayed
O'er the sharp shingles with her bleeding feet,
And stumbled almost every step she made.
And something rolled before her in a sheet,
Which she must still pursue howe'er afraid.
'Twas white and indistinct, nor stopped to meet
Her glance nor grasp, for still she gazed and grasped
And ran, but it escaped her as she clasped.

XXXIII

The dream changed. In a cave she stood, its walls
Were hung with marble icicles, the work
Of ages on its water-fretted halls,
Where waves might wash, and seals might breed and lurk.
Her hair was dripping, and the very balls
Of her black eyes seemed turned to tears, and murk
The sharp rocks looked below each drop they caught,
Which froze to marble as it fell, she thought.

XXXIV

And wet and cold and lifeless at her feet,
Pale as the foam that frothed on his dead brow,
Which she essayed in vain to clear (how sweet
Were once her cares, how idle seemed they now),
Lay Juan, nor could aught renew the beat
Of his quenched heart. And the sea dirges low
Rang in her sad ears like a mermaid's song,
And that brief dream appeared a life too long.

XXXV

And gazing on the dead, she thought his face
Faded, or altered into something new,
Like to her father's features, till each trace
More like and like to Lambro's aspect grew
With all his keen worn look and Grecian grace.
And starting, she awoke, and what to view?
Oh powers of heaven! What dark eye meets she there?
'Tis-'tis her father's-fixed upon the pair!

XXXVI

Then shrieking, she arose and shrieking fell,
With joy and sorrow, hope and fear, to see
Him whom she deemed a habitant where dwell
The ocean-buried, risen from death, to be
Perchance the death of one she loved too well.
Dear as her father had been to Haidée,
It was a moment of that awful kind-
I have seen such, but must not call to mind.

XXXVII

Up Juan sprung to Haidée's bitter shriek
And caught her falling, and from off the wall
Snatched down his sabre in hot haste to wreak
Vengeance on him who was the cause of all.
Then Lambro, who till now forbore to speak,
Smiled scornfully and said, 'Within my call,
A thousand scimitars await the word.
Put up, young man, put up your silly sword.'

XXXVIII

And Haidée clung around him. 'Juan,'tis-
'Tis Lambro-'tis my father! Kneel with me-
He will forgive us-yes-it must be-yes.
Oh dearest father, in this agony
Of pleasure and of pain, even while I kiss
Thy garment's hem with transport, can it be
That doubt should mingle with my filial joy?
Deal with me as thou wilt, but spare this boy.'

XXXIX

High and inscrutable the old man stood,
Calm in his voice and calm within his eye,
Not always signs with him of calmest mood.
He looked upon her, but gave no reply,
Then turned to Juan, in whose cheek the blood
Oft came and went, as there resolved to die.
In arms, at least, he stood in act to spring
On the first foe whom Lambro's call might bring.

XL

'Young man, your sword,' so Lambro once more said.
Juan replied, 'Not while this arm is free.'
The old man's cheek grew pale, but not with dread,
And drawing from his belt a pistol, he
Replied, 'Your blood be then on your own head,'
Then looked close at the flint, as if to see
'Twas fresh-for he had lately used the lock-
And next proceeded quietly to cock.

XLI

It has a strange quick jar upon the ear,
That cocking of a pistol, when you know
A moment more will bring the sight to bear
Upon your person, twelve yards off or so,
A gentlemanly distance, not too near,
If you have got a former friend for foe,
But after being fired at once or twice,
The ear becomes more Irish, and less nice.

more Irish ✧ A slur, meaning less discriminating.

XLII

Lambro presented, and one instant more
Had stopped this canto and Don Juan's breath,
When Haidée threw herself her boy before,
Stern as her sire. 'On me,' she cried, 'let death
Descend, the fault is mine. This fatal shore
He found, but sought not. I have pledged my faith.
I love him, I will die with him. I knew
Your nature's firmness-know your daughter's too.'

XLIII

A minute past, and she had been all tears
And tenderness and infancy, but now
She stood as one who championed human fears.
Pale, statue-like, and stern, she wooed the blow;
And tall beyond her sex and their compeers,
She drew up to her height, as if to show
A fairer mark, and with a fixed eye scanned
Her father's face, but never stopped his hand.

XLIV

He gazed on her, and she on him.'Twas strange
How like they looked. The expression was the same,
Serenely savage, with a little change
In the large dark eye's mutual-darted flame,
For she too was as one who could avenge,
If cause should be - a lioness, though tame.
Her father's blood before her father's face
Boiled up and proved her truly of his race.

XLV

I said they were alike, their features and
Their stature differing but in sex and years;
Even to the delicacy of their hand
There was resemblance, such as true blood wears.
And now to see them, thus divided, stand
In fixed ferocity, when joyous tears
And sweet sensations should have welcomed both,
Show what the passions are in their full growth.

XLVI

The father paused a moment, then withdrew
His weapon and replaced it, but stood still,
And looking on her, as to look her through,
'Not I,' he said, 'have sought this stranger's ill;
Not I have made this desolation. Few
Would bear such outrage and forbear to kill,
But I must do my duty. How thou hast
Done thine, the present vouches for the past.

XLVII

'Let him disarm, or by my father's head,
His own shall roll before you like a ball.'
He raised his whistle, as the word he said,
And blew. Another answered to the call,
And rushing in disorderly, though led,
And armed from boot to turban, one and all,
Some twenty of his train came rank on rank.
He gave the word, 'Arrest or slay the Frank.'

He gazed on her ❧ The confrontation between Haidée and Lambro has something of the quality of Antigone's defiance of Creon: a daughter's loyalty to love set against a father's implacable authority. *Antigone Led to Her Death (Detail)* by Giuseppe Diotti, 1845.

XLVIII

Then with a sudden movement, he withdrew
His daughter, while compressed within his clasp.
'Twixt her and Juan interposed the crew.
In vain she struggled in her father's grasp;
His arms were like a serpent's coil. Then flew
Upon their prey, as darts an angry asp,
The file of pirates, save the foremost, who
Had fallen with his right shoulder half cut through.

XLIX

The second had his cheek laid open, but
The third, a wary, cool old sworder, took
The blows upon his cutlass, and then put
His own well in, so well ere you could look
His man was floored and helpless at his foot
With the blood running like a little brook
From two smart sabre gashes, deep and red -
One on the arm, the other on the head.

L

And then they bound him where he fell and bore
Juan from the apartment. With a sign
Old Lambro bade them take him to the shore,
Where lay some ships which were to sail at nine.
They laid him in a boat and plied the oar
Until they reached some galliots, placed in line.
. On board of one of these and under hatches
They stowed him with strict orders to the watches.

GALLIOTS ✧ Small, fast galleys — typically single-masted with both oars and sails — commonly used by Ottoman and Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean

LI

The world is full of strange vicissitudes,
And here was one exceedingly unpleasant:
A gentleman so rich in the world's goods,
Handsome and young, enjoying all the present,
Just at the very time when he least broods
On such a thing is suddenly to sea sent,
Wounded and chained, so that he cannot move,
And all because a lady fell in love.

LII

Here I must leave him, for I grow pathetic,
    Moved by the Chinese nymph of tears, green tea,
. Than whom Cassandra was not more prophetic;
    For if my pure libations exceed three,
I feel my heart become so sympathetic
    That I must have recourse to black Bohea.
'Tis pity wine should be so deleterious,
For tea and coffee leave us much more serious,

Chinese nymph of tears ✧ A deliberate change of register after the violence and grief of the preceding stanzas. "Green tea" was considered a stimulant to the nerves and emotions in the Regency period — hence "nymph of tears." Cassandra, Apollo's prophetess in the *Iliad*, was condemned never to be believed despite always being right; Byron compares her prophetic melancholy to the weepy effects of too much tea. "Black Bohea" is a strong, dark Chinese tea — the antidote to excessive sentiment.

LIII

Unless when qualified with thee, cognac,
    Sweet naiad of the Phlegethontic rill!
. Ah, why the liver wilt thou thus attack
    And make, like other nymphs, thy lovers ill?
I would take refuge in weak punch, but rack
    (In each sense of the word), whene'er I fill
My mild and midnight beakers to the brim,
Wakes me next morning with its synonym.

Phlegethontic ✧ The river Phlegethon ("Blazing") was the river of fire in Hades. Byron humorously makes cognac into a "sweet naiad" — a water-nymph — of this fiery stream. "Rack" is a triple pun: (1) arrack, a rough spirit distilled from rice or palm; (2) the instrument of torture; and (3) the "wrack" or ruin of a hangover. The stanza is a *tour-de-force* of rhyme.

LIV

I leave Don Juan for the present, safe,
    Not sound, poor fellow, but severely wounded.
Yet could his corporal pangs amount to half
    Of those with which his Haidée's bosom bounded!
She was not one to weep and rave and chafe
    And then give way, subdued because surrounded.
Her mother was a Moorish maid from Fez,
Where all is Eden, or a wilderness.

wilderness ✧ This has been Haidée's journey in the Poem: from Eden to wilderness.

LV

There the large olive rains its amber store
    In marble fonts; there grain and flower and fruit
Gush from the earth until the land runs o'er;
    But there too many a poison-tree has root,
And midnight listens to the lion's roar,
    And long, long deserts scorch the camel's foot
Or heaving whelm the helpless caravan.
And as the soil is, so the heart of man.

LVI

Afric is all the sun's, and as her earth
Her human clay is kindled. Full of power
For good or evil, burning from its birth,
The Moorish blood partakes the planet's hour,
And like the soil beneath it will bring forth.
Beauty and love were Haidée's mother's dower,
But her large dark eye showed deep passion's force,
Though sleeping like a lion near a source.

LVII

Her daughter, tempered with a milder ray -
Like summer clouds all silvery, smooth, and fair,
Till slowly charged with thunder they display
Terror to earth and tempest to the air -
Had held till now her soft and milky way,
But overwrought with passion and despair,
The fire burst forth from her Numidian veins,
Even as the simoom sweeps the blasted plains.

Numidian. . . simoom Numidia was the ancient North African kingdom (roughly modern Algeria and Tunisia) whose cavalry were famous in the Roman wars. The "simoom" is the searingly hot desert wind of the Sahara and Arabian Peninsula, believed capable of killing travellers. The image is an 1846 lithograph by David Roberts of "The Approach of the Simoom in the Desert of Giza"

LVIII

The last sight which she saw was Juan's gore,
And he himself o'ermastered and cut down;
His blood was running on the very floor
Where late he trod, her beautiful, her own.
Thus much she viewed an instant and no more;
Her struggles ceased with one convulsive groan.
On her sire's arm, which until now scarce held
Her writhing, fell she like a cedar felled.

LIX

A vein had burst, and her sweet lips' pure dyes
Were dabbled with the deep blood which ran o'er;
And her head drooped as when the lily lies
O'ercharged with rain. Her summoned handmaids bore
Their lady to her couch with gushing eyes.
Of herbs and cordials they produced their store,
But she defied all means they could employ,
Like one life could not hold, nor death destroy.

A vein had burst Byron annotates this verse in his manuscript: "*This is no very uncommon effect of the violence of differing and conflicting passions, the Doge Francis Foscari on his deposition in 1457 – hearing the bells of St. Mark announce the election of his Successor – "mourut subitement d'une hemorragie causéé par une veine qui s'eclata dans sa poitrine" . . . at the age of eighty years when "who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him?" Before I was sixteen years of age I was witness to a melancholy instance of the same effect of mixed passions upon a young person – – who however did not die in consequence, at that time – but fell a victim some years afterwards to a seizure of the same kind arising from causes intimately connected with agitation of Mind.*" The image is Antoine Coypel's *Esther before Ahasuerus*

LX

Days lay she in that state unchanged; though chill
With nothing livid, still her lips were red.
She had no pulse, but death seemed absent still.
No hideous sign proclaimed her surely dead;
Corruption came not in each mind to kill
All hope. To look upon her sweet face bred
New thoughts of life, for it seemed full of soul;
She had so much, earth could not claim the whole.

` *The ruling passion. . .*

LXI

The ruling passion, such as marble shows
. When exquisitely chiselled, still lay there,
But fixed as marble's unchanged aspect throws
O'er the fair Venus, but forever fair,
. O'er the Laocoon's all eternal throes,
And ever-dying Gladiator's air.
Their energy like life forms all their fame,
Yet looks not life, for they are still the same.

LXII

She woke at length, but not as sleepers wake,
Rather the dead, for life seemed something new,
A strange sensation which she must partake
Perforce, since whatsoever met her view
Struck not on memory, though a heavy ache
Lay at her heart, whose earliest beat still true
Brought back the sense of pain without the cause,
For, for a while, the Furies made a pause.

LXIII

She looked on many a face with vacant eye,
On many a token without knowing what;
She saw them watch her without asking why,
And recked not who around her pillow sat.
Not speechless though she spoke not; not a sigh
Relieved her thoughts. Dull silence and quick chat
Were tried in vain by those who served; she gave
No sign, save breath, of having left the grave.

LXIV

Her handmaids tended, but she heeded not;
Her father watched, she turned her eyes away.
She recognized no being and no spot
However dear or cherished in their day.
They changed from room to room, but all forgot;
Gentle, but without memory she lay.
At length those eyes, which they would fain be weaning
Back to old thoughts, waxed full of fearful meaning.

The ruling passion ✧ Byron compares Haidée's frozen, death-like state to three of the most famous classical sculptures then in Rome. The *Venus de' Medici* (or *Capitoline Venus*) is "forever fair" but lifeless; the *Laocoön* group — the Trojan priest and his sons crushed by serpents, excavated in Rome in 1506 — writhes in eternal agony; and the "ever-dying Gladiator" (the *Dying Gaul* in the Capitoline Museum who is frozen between life and death. All three statues capture what Alexander Pope called "the Ruling Passion" — the dominant emotion fixed at the moment of supreme intensity.

ever-dying Gladiator ✒ The *Dying Gaul* in the Capitoline Museum, Rome. A Roman copy of a Hellenistic bronze, c. 230 BCE.

the Furies ✧ Perhaps Bryon means the avenging deities of Greek myth — Alecto, Megaera and Tisiphone — who pursued and tormented those guilty of crimes. But Haidée has committed no crime so, probably, he means simply the *mania* that gripped her.

LXV

And then a slave bethought her of a harp;
The harper came and tuned his instrument.
At the first notes, irregular and sharp,
On him her flashing eyes a moment bent,
Then to the wall she turned as if to warp
Her thoughts from sorrow through her heart re-sent,
And he begun a long low island song
Of ancient days, ere tyranny grew strong.

LXVI

Anon her thin wan fingers beat the wall
In time to his old tune. He changed the theme
And sung of love. The fierce name struck through all
Her recollection; on her flashed the dream
Of what she was and is, if ye could call
To be so being. In a gushing stream
The tears rushed forth from her o'erclouded brain,
Like mountain mists at length dissolved in rain.

LXVII

Short solace, vain relief! Thought came too quick
And whirled her brain to madness. She arose
As one who ne'er had dwelt among the sick
And flew at all she met, as on her foes.
But no one ever heard her speak or shriek,
Although her paroxysm drew towards its close;
Hers was a frenzy which disdained to rave,
Even when they smote her in the hope to save.

Even when they smote her ✧ Violent "remedies" were routinely applied to the insane/catatonic in Byron's era: cold water, restraints, beatings.

LXVIII

Yet she betrayed at times a gleam of sense.
Nothing could make her meet her father's face,
Though on all other things with looks intense
She gazed, but none she ever could retrace. Food she
refused and raiment; no pretence
Availed for either. Neither change of place
Nor time nor skill nor remedy could give her
Senses to sleep - the power seemed gone forever.

LXIX

Twelve days and nights she withered thus. At last
Without a groan or sigh or glance to show
A parting pang, the spirit from her past.
And they who watched her nearest could not know
The very instant, till the change that cast
Her sweet face into shadow, dull and slow,
Glazed o'er her eyes, the beautiful, the black.
Oh to possess such lustre - and then lack!

LXX

She died, but not alone; she held within
A second principle of life, which might
Have dawned a fair and sinless child of sin,
. But closed its little being without light
And went down to the grave unborn, wherein
Blossom and bough lie withered with one blight.
In vain the dews of heaven descend above
The bleeding flower and blasted fruit of love.

A FAIR AND SINLESS CHILD OF SIN ✧ Juan's only child is never born. Another instance of Byron's fascination with only-children. Here, an invention that deepens the bathos but also, somehow, appropriate both for the mythos of Haidée—the only woman in the Epic to whom Juan is really attached—and for the finally rootless Juan.

LXXI

Thus lived, thus died she. Never more on her
Shall sorrow light or shame. She was not made
Through years or moons the inner weight to bear,
Which colder hearts endure till they are laid
By age in earth. Her days and pleasures were
Brief, but delightful, such as had not stayed
Long with her destiny. But she sleeps well
By the seashore, whereon she loved to dwell.

LXXII

That isle is now all desolate and bare,
Its dwellings down, its tenants past away;
None but her own and father's grave is there,
And nothing outward tells of human clay.
Ye could not know where lies a thing so fair;
No stone is there to show, no tongue to say
What was. No dirge, except the hollow sea's,
Mourns o'er the beauty of the Cyclades.

LXXIII

But many a Greek maid in a loving song
Sighs o'er her name; and many an islander
With her sire's story makes the night less long.
Valour was his, and beauty dwelt with her.
If she loved rashly, her life paid for wrong;
A heavy price must all pay who thus err,
In some shape. Let none think to fly the danger,
For soon or late Love is his own avenger.

LXXIV

But let me change this theme, which grows too sad,
And lay this sheet of sorrows on the shelf.
I don't much like describing people mad,
For fear of seeming rather touched myself.
Besides I've no more on this head to add;
And as my Muse is a capricious elf,
We'll put about and try another tack
. With Juan, left half-killed some stanzas back.

LXXV

Wounded and fettered, 'cabined, cribbed, confined',
. Some days and nights elapsed before that he
Could altogether call the past to mind;
And when he did, he found himself at sea,
Sailing six knots an hour before the wind.
The shores of Ilion lay beneath their lee;
Another time he might have liked to see'em,
But now was not much pleased with Cape Sigeum.

LXXVI

There on the green and village-cotted hill is
(Flanked by the Hellespont and by the sea)
Entombed the bravest of the brave, Achilles;
They say so (Bryant says the contrary).
. And further downward, tall and towering still, is
The tumulus - of whom? Heaven knows;'t may be
Patroclus, Ajax, or Protesilaus,
. All heroes who if living still would slay us.

Love is his own avenger ✧ A typically compressed and expressive Byronic epithet. The revenge of Love here is double: Haidée pays with her life — dying of grief after Juan is sold into slaver — and Lambro, too, who parted the lovers falls under the shadow of the aphorism. Love avenges itself both on those who love too rashly and on those who violate love in others. The idea has several classical roots in, for example, *Anteros* the brother of Eros and winged companion of Aphrodite whose name means literally "love returned" or "counter-love," and whose function was to avenge unrequited love and to punish those who scorn it. Then there is the myth of *Narcissus* who contemptuously spurned the love of others; the Gods punished him by causing him to fall in love with his own reflection a form of love, self-consuming and unrequitable. Also, if your guess—like mine—about Byron's own terminal illness is 'neurosyphilis,' then this idea also has a sad, prophetic, reflexive effect.

put about and try another tack ✧ Sailing terms for changing direction in a head-wind so as to put the sails at a different acute angle to the direction of the wind. This maneuvre allows the billow of the sail to act like a wing while the air, streaming across it, pulls the boat forward. The direction that the boat takes to make use of a headwind in this way is called a '*tack*'. Ultimately, the boat may have to tack from side to side across the wind several times to travel forward.

cabined, cribbed, confined' ✧ A quotation from *Macbeth* III.iv.24, where Macbeth laments that his fears keep him hemmed in. The shores of "Ilion" are the shores of ancient Troy, on the Dardanelles. "Cape Sigeum" (modern Yenişehir) is the promontory at the southern entrance to the strait, near the traditional site of Troy. Juan is sailing past sites that Byron himself visited in 1810 — and that he had already celebrated in *Childe Harold* II.

Bryant says the contrary ✧ Jacob Bryant (1715–1804) was an English scholar who published *A Dissertation concerning the War of Troy* (1796), arguing that the Trojan War never happened and that Homer's Troy was a fiction. His thesis was disproved by Heinrich Schliemann's excavations at Hissarlik in the 1870s.

Patroclus, Ajax, or Protesilaus ✧ All heroes of the Trojan War. Patroclus was Achilles' beloved companion, whose death at Hector's hands brought Achilles back to the fight. Ajax (the "Greater Ajax," son of Telamon) went mad and killed himself after losing the contest for Achilles' armour. Protesilaus was the first Greek to land at Troy and the first to be killed.

LXXVII

High barrows without marble or a name,
A vast, untilled, and mountain-skirted plain,
And Ida in the distance, still the same,
And old Scamander (if'tis he) remain.
The situation seems still formed for fame.
A hundred thousand men might fight again
With ease; but where I sought for Ilion's walls,
The quiet sheep feeds, and the tortoise crawls,

LXXVIII

Troops of untended horses, here and there
Some little hamlets with new names uncouth,
Some shepherds (unlike Paris) led to stare
A moment at the European youth,
Whom to the spot their schoolboy feelings bear,
A Turk with beads in hand and pipe in mouth,
Extremely taken with his own religion,
Are what I found there - but the devil a Phrygian.

LXXIX

Don Juan, here permitted to emerge
From his dull cabin, found himself a slave,
Forlorn and gazing on the deep blue surge,
O'ershadowed there by many a hero's grave.
Weak still with loss of blood, he scarce could urge
A few brief questions; and the answers gave
No very satisfactory information
About his past or present situation.

LXXX

He saw some fellow captives, who appeared
To be Italians, as they were in fact.
From them at least their destiny he heard,
Which was an odd one. A troop going to act
In Sicily, all singers, duly reared
In their vocation, had not been attacked
In sailing from Livorno by the pirate,
But sold by the impresario at no high rate.

Old Scamander ✒ The Scamander is the river on the plain of Troy, called "Xanthus" by the gods in the *Iliad*. Byron's parenthetical doubt — "if 'tis he" — reflects genuine uncertainty about the topographical identification of Homeric sites, a scholarly controversy that raged throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and which had engaged him personally during his 1810 visit. The watercolor sketch of the exit of the Scamander (and Simoes? … the geography was then uncertain) rivers to the sea—the site of Troy is in the hills in the background—is by Sir William Gell *from*"The Topography of Troy, and its Vicinity", dated 1804.

the devil a Phrygian ✧ Paris, prince of Troy, was raised as a shepherd on Mount Ida — the gods having decreed his exposure at birth because of a prophecy that he would cause Troy's destruction. His "Judgement of Paris" — choosing Aphrodite over Hera and Athena — set in motion the chain of events leading to the Trojan War. Phrygia was the ancient name for the region around Troy, and its people are all gone ("The devil a Phrygian").

sold by the impresario ✧ One of the best comic episodes in ***Don⚔Juan***: an entire Italian opera company betrayed by their own theatrical manager/producer and destined for the slave markets of Constantinople. Barbary and Ottoman piracy in the Mediterranean remained a serious threat well into the 19th century.

` *By one of these*

LXXXI

By one of these, the buffo of the party,
. Juan was told about their curious case.
For although destined to the Turkish mart, he
Still kept his spirits up - at least his face;
The little fellow really looked quite hearty
And bore him with some gaiety and grace,
Showing a much more reconciled demeanour
Than did the prima donna and the tenor.

THE BUFFO ✧ The *buffo* (or *basso buffo*) is the comic bass in Italian opera — the role that sings the patter-songs and provides comic relief. Byron gives him the name "Raucocanti" (roughly, "hoarse-singer") using a stock character-type from *commedia dell'arte* and opera *buffa*: garrulous, resilient, cynically cheerful. Raucocanti's account of the company is satire on the Italian opera world that Byron knew well from his years in Venice and Ravenna (1816–21)

LXXXII

In a few words he told their hapless story,
Saying, 'Our Machiavelian impresario,
Making a signal off some promontory,
Hailed a strange brig. Corpo di Caio Mario!
We were transferred on board her in a hurry
Without a single scudo of salario,
But if the Sultan has a taste for song,
We will revive our fortunes before long.

CORPO DI CAIO MARIO ✧ "Body of Caius Marius!" — a mock-oath. Caius Marius (157–86 BCE) was a Roman general and seven-times consul who saved Rome from barbarian invasion but later became a brutal dictator. The *scudo* was a silver coin. Raucocanti's complaint — sold without pay — is the professional musician's perennial grievance.

LXXXIII

'The prima donna, though a little old
And haggard with a dissipated life
And subject, when the house is thin, to cold,
Has some good notes; and then the tenor's wife,
With no great voice, is pleasing to behold.
Last carnival she made a deal of strife
By carrying off Count Cesare Cicogna
From an old Roman princess at Bologna.

LXXXIV

'And then there are the dancers: there's the Nini
With more than one profession gains by all.
Then there's that laughing slut the Pelegrini;
She too was fortunate last carnival
And made at least five hundred good zecchini,
. But spends so fast, she has not now a paul.
And then there's the Grotesca - such a dancer!
Where men have souls or bodies she must answer.

ZECCHIN . . . PAUL ✧ A *zecchino* (plural *zecchini*, also "sequin") was a gold coin first minted in Venice, worth roughly 9–10 Italian *lire* — a substantial sum. Five hundred zecchini would be a small fortune. A *paul* (or *paolo*) was a small papal silver coin worth about half a *lira* — pocket-change

LXXXV

'As for the figuranti, they are like
The rest of all that tribe with here and there
A pretty person, which perhaps may strike;
The rest are hardly fitted for a fair.
There's one, though tall and stiffer than a pike,
Yet has a sentimental kind of air
Which might go far, but she don't dance with vigour,
The more's the pity, with her face and figure.

LXXXVI

'As for the men, they are a middling set.
The Musico is but a cracked old basin,
But being qualified in one way yet,
May the seraglio do to set his face in
And as a servant some preferment get.
His singing I no further trust can place in.
From all the pope makes yearly'twould perplex
To find three perfect pipes of the third sex.

LXXXVII

'The tenor's voice is spoilt by affectation,
And for the bass, the beast can only bellow;
In fact he had no singing education,
An ignorant, noteless, timeless, tuneless fellow,
But being the prima donna's near relation,
Who swore his voice was very rich and mellow,
They hired him, though to hear him you'd believe
An ass was practising recitative.

LXXXVIII

"Twould not become myself to dwell upon
My own merits, and though young, I see, sir, you
Have got a travelled air, which shows you one
To whom the opera is by no means new.
You've heard of Raucocanti? I'm the man;
The time may come when you may hear me too.
You was not last year at the fair of Lugo?
But next, when I'm engaged to sing there - do go.

THE THIRD SEX ✒ The *musico* is a castrato — a male singer castrated before puberty to preserve his soprano or alto voice. Castrati dominated Italian opera from the 17th to early 19th century; the last known castrato, Alessandro Moreschi, died in 1922. "From all the pope makes yearly" refers to the papal choir's continued use of castrati: the Sistine Chapel choir employed them until 1902. The image is Bartolomeo Nazari's portrait of the celebrated 18th century castrato, Farinelli (Carlo Broschi)

THE FAIR OF LUGO ✧ Lugo is a small town in Romagna, not far from Ravenna where Byron was living when he wrote this Canto. Its annual fair was a modest provincial event.

LXXXIX

'Our baritone I almost had forgot,
A pretty lad, but bursting with conceit.
With graceful action, science not a jot,
A voice of no great compass and not sweet,
He always is complaining of his lot,
Forsooth, scarce fit for ballads in the street.
In lovers' parts his passion more to breathe,
Having no heart to show, he shows his teeth.'

XC

Here Raucocanti's eloquent recital
Was interrupted by the pirate crew,
Who came at stated moments to invite all
The captives back to their sad berths. Each threw
A rueful glance upon the waves (which bright all
From the blue skies derived a double blue,
Dancing all free and happy in the sun)
And then went down the hatchway one by one.

XCI

They heard next day that in the Dardanelles,
Waiting for his sublimity's firmán,
. The most imperative of sovereign spells,
Which everybody does without who can,
More to secure them in their naval cells,
Lady to lady, well as man to man,
Were to be chained and lotted out per couple
For the slave market of Constantinople.

his sublimity's firmán ✧ A *firman* (from Persian *farmān*) was an imperial decree or passport issued by the Ottoman Sultan — "his Sublimity" being one of the Sultan's formal titles. Without a firman, no vessel could legally pass through the Dardanelles into the Sea of Marmara and on to Constantinople.

slave market of Constantinople ✧ The largest slave market in the eastern Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire's slave trade was vast and diverse: slaves came from the Caucasus, Africa, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean. They were employed as domestic servants, concubines, soldiers (the Janissary corps was originally composed of enslaved Christian boys), and administrators. The trade was not abolished in the Ottoman Empire until the late 19th century.

XCII

It seems when this allotment was made out,
There chanced to be an odd male and odd female,
Who (after some discussion and some doubt,
If the soprano might be deemed to be male,
They placed him o'er the women as a scout)
Were linked together, and it happened the male
Was Juan, who - an awkward thing at his age -
Paired off with a bacchante blooming visage.

XCIII

With Raucocanti lucklessly was chained
The tenor. These two hated with a hate
Found only on the stage, and each more pained
With this his tuneful neighbour than his fate.
Sad strife arose, for they were so cross-grained,
Instead of bearing up without debate,
That each pulled different ways with many an oath,
Arcades ambo, id est blackguards both.

XCIV

Juan's companion was a Romagnole,
. But bred within the March of old Ancona,
With eyes that looked into the very soul
(And other chief points of a bella donna),
. Bright and as black and burning as a coal.
And through her clear brunette complexion shone a
Great wish to please, a most attractive dower,
Especially when added to the power.

XCV

But all that power was wasted upon him,
. For sorrow o'er each sense held stern command.
Her eye might flash on his, but found it dim.
And though thus chained, as natural her hand
Touched his, nor that nor any handsome limb
(And she had some not easy to withstand)
Could stir his pulse or make his faith feel brittle.
Perhaps his recent wounds might help a little.

XCVI

No matter. We should ne'er too much inquire,
But facts are facts, no knight could be more true,
And firmer faith no ladylove desire.
We will omit the proofs, save one or two.
'Tis said no one in hand 'can hold a fire
. By thought of frosty Caucasus', but few
I really think; yet Juan's then ordeal
Was more triumphant, and not much less real.

Arcades ambo ✧ Byron quotes Virgil's Seventh Eclogue (line 4): *Arcades ambo*, "both Arcadians," meaning both skilled in pastoral song. Byron's translation, however — "blackguards both" — inverts Virgil's meaning. The phrase had become proverbial in 19th century English for "two of a kind" (usually pejorative).

Romagnole ✧ A woman from Romagna — the region of north-eastern Italy centred on Bologna, Ravenna, Rimini and Forlì, where Byron was living. "The March of old Ancona" is the neighbouring region to the south (the *Marca Anconitana*, now Le Marche). His mistress, Teresa Guiccioli, was herself from Ravenna.

bella donna ✧ A beautiful woman but also the name of the poison in the *deadly nightshade* lilly, atropine

wasted upon him ✧ The "standing joke" of ***Don⚔Juan*** is that Byron's hero, Juan, far from being a rake, is mild-mannered, faithful, upright, conventional and rather passive. His love for Haidée will blind him to all temptation for some time to come.

can hold a fire ✧ A quotation from *Richard II* I.iii.294, where Bolingbroke's father, John of Gaunt, tries to console his exiled son. Byron means here that Juan's love for Haidée here triumphs over 'the fires' of temptation.

XCVII

Here I might enter on a chaste description,
    Having withstood temptation in my youth,
. But hear that several people take exception
    At the first two books having too much truth.
Therefore I'll make Don Juan leave the ship soon,
    Because the publisher declares in sooth,
Through needles' eyes it easier for the camel is
. To pass than those two cantos into families.

Having withstood temptation ✧ As if … Byron was notoriously riotous while at Cambridge and adventurous during his "grand tour" in Greece,1809-11

Through needles' eyes ✧ Matthew 19:24: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Byron's publisher, John Murray, had been pressing him to tone down the sexual content of ***Don⚔Juan*** to make it acceptable to "families" — the polite middle-class readership on which Murray's business depended.

XCVIII

'Tis all the same to me; I'm fond of yielding
    And therefore leave them to the purer page
Of Smollett, Prior, Ariosto, Fielding,
    . Who say strange things for so correct an age.
I once had great alacrity in wielding
    My pen and liked poetic war to wage
And recollect the time when all this cant
Would have provoked remarks, which now it shan't

Smollett, Prior, Ariosto … ✧ Tobias Smollett was famous for the bawdy picaresque of *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*; Matthew Prior wrote witty, often risqué vers de société; Ludovico Ariosto filled *Orlando Furioso* with sexual adventures; and Henry Fielding made *Tom Jones* a byword for comic licence. Byron's point is that the "correct age" that condemns ***Don⚔Juan*** happily reads far more explicit writers.

XCIX

As boys love rows, my boyhood liked a squabble,
    But at this hour I wish to part in peace,
Leaving such to the literary rabble,
    Whether my verse's fame be doomed to cease,
While the right hand which wrote it still is able,
    Or of some centuries to take a lease.
The grass upon my grave will grow as long
And sigh to midnight winds, but not to song.

C

Of poets who come down to us through distance
    Of time and tongues, the foster babes of Fame,
Life seems the smallest portion of existence.
    Where twenty ages gather o'er a name,
'Tis as a snowball which derives assistance
    From every flake and yet rolls on the same,
Even till an iceberg it may chance to grow,
But after all'tis nothing but cold snow.

CI

And so great names are nothing more than nominal,
    And love of glory's but an airy lust,
Too often in its fury overcoming all
    Who would as'twere identify their dust
From out the wide destruction, which, entombing all,
    Leaves nothing 'till the coming of the just',
Save change. I've stood upon Achilles' tomb
And heard Troy doubted; time will doubt of Rome.

CII

The very generations of the dead
    Are swept away and tomb inherits tomb
Until the memory of an age is fled
    And, buried, sinks beneath its offspring's doom.
Where are the epitaphs our fathers read?
    Save a few gleaned from the sepulchral gloom,
Which once-named myriads nameless lie beneath
And lose their own in universal death.

CIII

I canter by the spot each afternoon
    Where perished in his fame the hero-boy,
Who lived too long for men, but died too soon
    For human vanity, the young De Foix.
A broken pillar, not uncouthly hewn,
    But which neglect is hastening to destroy,
Records Ravenna's carnage on its face,
While weeds and ordure rankle round the base.

CIV

I pass each day where Dante's bones are laid
    A little cupola, more neat than solemn,
Protects his dust, but reverence here is paid
    To the bard's tomb, and not the warrior's column.
The time must come, when both alike decayed,
    The chieftain's trophy and the poet's volume
Will sink where lie the songs and wars of earth
Before Pelides' death or Homer's birth.

Achilles' tomb ✧ Byron visited the reputed tomb of Achilles at Sigeion in 1810 and heard the scholarly arguments (see Bryant, stanza LXXVI above) that the Trojan War never happened. Here he suggests that if even the most famous events of antiquity can be questioned, nothing is secure from oblivion. The sentiment echoes Shelley's *Ozymandias* (1818), published just a year before: "Nothing beside remains." Both poets were meditating on the ruins of empire during the post-Napoleonic period.

the hero-boy ✧ Gaston de Foix, Duc de Nemours (1489–1512), was a brilliant young French general who won the Battle of Ravenna on 11 April 1512 against the forces of the Holy League, but was killed in the pursuit of the fleeing enemy. He was twenty-two. The "broken pillar" was a memorial on the outskirts of Ravenna. Byron, who was living in Ravenna when he wrote this Canto, cantered past it on his daily ride.

Where Dante's bones are laid ✒ My photo of the "little cupola" of Dante's tomb in Ravenna. The relief sculpture showing Dante at his writing desk is the work of Pietro Lombardo (c. 1483). The rather ornate coupola with cast bronze doors housing the original sarcophagus was completed in 1780. Byron, who lived nearby in the Palazzo Guiccioli, would have passed it almost daily. "Before Pelides' death or Homer's birth" — Pelides is Achilles (son of Peleus). Byron's point is that both the warrior's monument and the poet's volume will eventually sink into the oblivion that preceded the very events they commemorate.

CV

With human blood that column was cemented,
    With human filth that column is defiled,
As if the peasant's coarse contempt were vented
    To show his loathing of the spot he soiled.
Thus is the trophy used, and thus lamented
    Should ever be those bloodhounds, from whose wild
Instinct of gore and glory earth has known
Those sufferings Dante saw in hell alone.

CVI

Yet there will still be bards. Though fame is smoke,
    Its fumes are frankincense to human thought;
And the unquiet feelings, which first woke
    Song in the world, will seek what then they sought.
As on the beach the waves at last are broke,
    Thus to their extreme verge the passions brought
Dash into poetry, which is but passion,
Or at least was so ere it grew a fashion.

ere it grew a fashion ✧ Takes another swipe at the Lake Poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey), whose verse Byron considered passionless and modish.

CVII

If in the course of such a life as was
    At once adventurous and contemplative,
. Men who partake all passions as they pass
    Acquire the deep and bitter power to give
Their images again as in a glass,
    And in such colours that they seem to live.
You may do right forbidding them to show'em,
But spoil (I think) a very pretty poem.

adventurous and contemplative ✧ A self-portrait. No English poet of his generation was more "adventurous and contemplative" than Byron.

CVIII

Oh ye, who make the fortunes of all books,
    Benign ceruleans of the second sex!
. Who advertise new poems by your looks,
    Your imprimatur will ye not annex?
What, must I go to the oblivious cooks,
    Those Cornish plunderers of Parnassian wrecks?
Ah, must I then the only minstrel be
Proscribed from tasting your Castalian tea?

Benign ceruleans ✧ Here and in the next four stanzas Byron addresses the *bluestockings*: a term for educated, literary women that originated with the informal intellectual salons hosted by Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vesey, and others in mid-18th-century London. "Blue stockings" were the woollen worsteds of (men's) informal everyday use, contrasting with the more elegant black silk for formal occasions. "Cerulean" however is, literally, 'sky-blue'. The "Cornish plunderers of Parnassian wrecks'" refers to the Cornish custom of salvaging (or plundering) shipwrecks and the "oblivious cooks" to bakers of Cornish pasties who lined their tins with paper, supposedly torn from remaindered books. "Castalian tea" conflates the Castalian Spring on Mount Parnassus — sacred to Apollo and the Muses — with the tea-tables of literary London.

CIX

What, can I prove a lion then no more?
. A ballroom bard, a foolscap, hot-press darling?
To bear the compliments of many a bore
And sigh, 'I can't get out', like Yorick's starling.
. Why then I'll swear, as poet Wordy swore
. (Because the world won't read him, always snarling),
That taste is gone, that fame is but a lottery,
Drawn by the bluecoat misses of a coterie.

CX

Oh 'darkly, deeply, beautifully blue',
. As someone somewhere sings about the sky,
And I, ye learnèd ladies, say of you.
They say your stockings are so (heaven knows why,
I have examined few pair of that hue),
Blue as the garters which serenely lie
. Round the patrician left legs, which adorn
The festal midnight and the levee morn.

CXI

Yet some of you are most seraphic creatures,
But times are altered since, a rhyming lover
You read my stanzas, and I read your features;
And - but no matter, all those things are over.
Still I have no dislike to learnèd natures,
For sometimes such a world of virtues cover.
I know one woman of that purple school,
The loveliest, chastest, best, but - quite a fool.

CXII

Humboldt, 'the first of travellers', but not
. The last, if late accounts be accurate,
Invented, by some name I have forgot,
As well as the sublime discovery's date,
An airy instrument, with which he sought
To ascertain the atmospheric state,
By measuring the intensity of blue.
Oh Lady Daphne, let me measure you!

A LION ✧ To be "a lion" was Regency slang for being the celebrity of the social season — fêted, invited everywhere, stared at. Byron had been the most spectacular literary "lion" London had ever seen after the publication of *Childe Harold* I–II in 1812: "I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

YORICK'S STARLING ✧ In Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), the narrator Yorick hears a caged starling repeating "I can't get out — I can't get out." The bird becomes a symbol of captivity and frustrated desire for freedom. Byron applies it to his own situation: trapped in the cage of literary celebrity, unable to escape the expectations of his audience.

WORDY ✧ William Wordsworth whom Byron considered pompous, dull, and self-important: "a poetical charlatan and political parasite". That Wordsworth blamed declining readership on public taste rather than his own shortcomings was a charge Byron found irresistible.

ARKLY, DEEPLY, BEAUTIFULLY BLUE ✧ Byron quotes (and pretends to half-forget) a line from Southey's poem *Madoc* (1805). But Southey was referring to the ocean, not the sky.

GARTERS ✧ The emblem of the English order of chivalry *The Order of the Garter* is a deep blue coloured velvet strap (top, left) worn about the left thigh of men and the left arm of women. It bears the motto "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*".

CXIII

But to the narrative. The vessel bound
With slaves to sell off in the capital,
After the usual process, might be found
At anchor under the seraglio wall.
. Her cargo, from the plague being safe and sound,
Were landed in the market, one and all,
And there with Georgians, Russians, and Circassians,
. Bought up for different purposes and passions.

CXIV

Some went off dearly; fifteen hundred dollars
For one Circassian, a sweet girl, were given,
Warranted virgin. Beauty's brightest colours
Had decked her out in all the hues of heaven.
Her sale sent home some disappointed bawlers,
Who bade on till the hundreds reached eleven,
But when the offer went beyond, they knew
'Twas for the Sultan and at once withdrew.

CXV

Twelve negresses from Nubia brought a price
Which the West Indian market scarce would bring,
Though Wilberforce at last has made it twice
. What 'twas ere abolition; and the thing
Need not seem very wonderful, for vice
Is always much more splendid than a king.
The virtues, even the most exalted, charity,
Are saving; vice spares nothing for a rarity.

CXVI

But for the destiny of this young troop,
How some were bought by pashas, some by Jews,
How some to burdens were obliged to stoop,
And others rose to the command of crews
As renegadoes; while in hapless group,
Hoping no very old vizier might choose,
The females stood, as one by one they picked'em,
To make a mistress or fourth wife or victim -

One woman ✒ ***PC*** suggests this may refer to Anne, Countess of Charlemont, a celebrated figure in early 19th century literary and aristocratic circles, whom Byron called the "blue-winged Kashmirian butterfly of book-learning" in his 1821 satirical *ecologues*: "The Blues". Byron admired her deeply in 1813, once writing that looking into her face made one forget everything else, and even declaring he would "build and burn another Troy" to be beloved by her. The portrait with her son is by Thomas Lawrence

Humboldt ✧ Alexander von Humboldt, the great Prussian naturalist and explorer whose *Personal Narrative* of his South American expedition (1814–29) made him the most celebrated scientific traveller of the age. The instrument Byron half-remembers is the *cyanometer* — a device not, in fact, invented by Humboldt but used by him during his Andean expeditions. Byron's alternate suggestion in the final couplet sounds equally useful and much more fun!

the seraglio ✧ The Topkapı Seraglio (palace) dominated the headland at the junction of the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn, and the Sea of Marmara.

Circassians ✧ Circassian women (from the north-western Caucasus, modern-day southern Russia/Georgia) were legendary in the Ottoman world for their beauty and commanded the highest prices in the slave markets.

CXVII

All this must be reserved for further song,
    Also our hero's lot, howe'er unpleasant
(Because this canto has become too long),
    Must be postponed discreetly for the present.
I'm sensible redundancy is wrong,
    But could not for the Muse of me put less in't
And now delay the progress of Don Juan
Till what is called in Ossian the fifth duan.
.

Wilberforce ✧ William Wilberforce, the English politician and philanthropist who led the parliamentary campaign to abolish the slave trade. The Slave Trade Act of 1807 prohibited British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade; the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 abolished slavery throughout most of the British Empire. Byron's point is that abolition, by reducing the supply, has *increased* the price of slaves elsewhere. "Vice is always much more splendid than a king" — i.e., vice will always outbid virtue.

Ossian ✧ In the 1760s a Scots poet, James Macpherson, published two prose-poems that he claimed were translations from an ancient Gaelic epic poet named Ossian. They were remarkably popular in Europe and the United States, although Dr Sam Johnson noted they were "another proof of Scotch conspiracy in national falsehood". Byron's association of ***Don⚔Juan*** and "Ossian's" is, of course, ironic.

Canto V

Constantinople and the Suleymaniye Mosque *Suleymaniye Mosque and Tomb from Serasker Tower*: an oil-color rendering of an engraving by William Henry Bartlett for a well-known 1839 travel book "The Beauties of the Bosphorus," by Julia Pardoe.

Some selections from Canto V

The wind off the Euxine; autumn's bleak beginning and the Parcae; shivering slaves of every nation in the market; Juan jaded but "serene in carriage"; Johnson introduced	A crowd of shivering slaves of every nation / And age and sex were in the market ranged.	V–IX
Baba buys Juan and Johnson; digressions on slavery and digestion: the slave-merchant's dinner and troubled conscience; Alexander and eating.	'Tis pleasant purchasing our fellow creatures, / And all are to be sold, if you consider / Their passions.	XXVI–XXXII
Baba leads to the innner apartments of the seraglio; a cupboard of Ottoman clothes; Baba proposes circumcision; Juan refuses the offered female garments	'Old gentleman, I'm not a lady.'	LXIV–LXXIII
More lavish but tasteless apartments; Gulbeyaz rises "as Venus rose with from the wave"; Mary Queen of Scots; Ninon de l'Enclos; Diana's chorus; nil admirari	As Venus rose with from the wave, on them / Bent like an antelope a Paphian pair of eyes.	XCIII–CII
Gulbeyaz "rather ordered than was granting"; poniard at her girdle; "Legitimacy" (Congress of Vienna); "Christian, canst thou love?" — Juan bursts into tears.	'Christian, canst thou love?' / Conceived that phrase was quite enough to move.	CIX–CXVII
Gulbeyaz' rage: she throws herself on his breast; Juan declines; Gulbeyaz's fury; Seneca's Medea; Hotspur and Lear ("kill, kill, kill"); rage dissolves into shame	'The prisoned eagle will not pair, nor I / Serve a sultana's sensual phantasy.'	CXVIII–CXXXII
Sultan arrives; satirical portrait; envoi ; bowstrung brother; Suleiman the Magnificent; Homer nods ; finished Ravenna, Nov. 1820.	'I see you've bought another girl; 'tis pity / That a mere Christian should be half so pretty.'	CXLV–CLX

I

When amatory poets sing their loves
In liquid lines mellifluously bland,
And pair their rhymes as Venus yokes her doves,
They little think what mischief is in hand.
The greater their success the worse it proves,
As Ovid's verse may give to understand.
Even Petrarch's self, if judged with due severity,
Is the Platonic pimp of all posterity.

II

I therefore do denounce all amorous writing,
Except in such a way as not to attract;
Plain, simple, short, and by no means inviting,
But with a moral to each error tacked,
Formed rather for instructing than delighting,
And with all passions in their turn attacked.
Now if my Pegasus should not be shod ill,
This poem will become a moral model.

III

The European with the Asian shore
Sprinkled with palaces, the ocean stream
Here and there studded with a seventy-four,
Sophia's cupola with golden gleam,
The cypress groves, Olympus high and hoar,
The twelve isles, and the more than I could dream,
Far less describe, present the very view
Which charmed the charming Mary Montagu.

IV

I have a passion for the name of Mary,
For once it was a magic sound to me,
And still it half calls up the realms of fairy,
Where I beheld what never was to be;
All feelings changed, but this was last to vary,
A spell from which even yet I am not quite free.
But I grow sad and let a tale grow cold,
Which must not be pathetically told.

` *The wind swept down the Euxine...*

liquid lines... bland ✧ The louche Lord langorously alliterates.

Venus yokes her doves ✧ In the second of Ovid's *Amores* elegies he counsels Cupid to borrow the chariot used by his mother, Venus, that is drawn by paired doves and to lead a procession of "captive" maids and youths in triumphal procession.

the worse it proves ✧ Encouraging young lovers with 'amatory' verse can only lead to naughtiness such as Ovid describes in his later *Ars Amatoria*

Petrarch's self... Platonic pimp ✧ Petrach, the great Italian humanist poet, wrote more than 300 courtly love sonnets to a young married woman, usually identified as Laura de Noves, in the mid-14th century (see Canto III.viii). The poems might be described as "platonic," to the extent that Petrach's Laura—with whom he had little personal contact—becomes an idealized object of his love, by analogy to the abstract *forms* in Platos's ontology. But the number, and sometimes sensual detail of the poems suggest they should also be read as a sublimation of erotic longing. "Platonic pimp" is an oxymoron, of course: Byron is insinuating Petrach's refined verse had erotic effect on later readers. Still, it's worth noting that, Petrarch, who admired Aristotle and Cicero had little knowledge of Plato or his works; the elevation of Platonism in the Italian Renaissance was due to the Florentine humanists of the 15^{the} century.

denounce all amorous writing ✧ If you believe any of this... have I got a bridge to sell you!

Pegasus ✧ Where the mythic winged-stallion's hoof struck the rocks at the top of Mount Helicon, sacred to the Muses, sprung the *Hippocrene* ('horse spring') whose waters when drunk supposedly inspired poetry.

The European with the Asian shore ✧ A diorama of the Bosphorus straits where Constantinople dominates the mouth of the straits from the European side. The Hagia Sophia, the great Byzantine Cathedral converted by the Turks into a a mosque, stands on a high point of the promontory. A 'seventy-four' is a warship with so many guns. But the geography of this stanza encompasses the whole region where a young Byron toured in 1809-11: Mount Olympus and the "Twelve Isles" refer to Greece and (presumably) the Cyclades. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) was famous for her independence, wit and voyages; her husband was the British Ambassador to Constantinople from 1716 to 1718. Her Turkish Embassy Letters were published and widely known.

a passion for the name of Mary ✧ Or, rather, a passion for several women of that name during his youth including Mary Chaworth, a distant relative and supposedly his "first love" at age 15. He wrote several poems for her but she did not return his interest. When, after a failed marriage, she tried to contact him in 1814, he was at the height of his early fame and entangled with his half-sister Augusta. He then avoided Mary.

V

The wind swept down the Euxine, and the wave
Broke foaming o'er the blue Symplegades.
'Tis a grand sight from off the Giant's Grave
To watch the progress of those rolling seas
Between the Bosphorus, as they lash and lave
Europe and Asia, you being quite at ease.
There's not a sea the passenger e'er pukes in,
Turns up more dangerous breakers than the Euxine.

VI

'Twas a raw day of autumn's bleak beginning,
When nights are equal, but not so the days.
The Parcae then cut short the further spinning
Of seamen's fates, and the loud tempests raise
The waters, and repentance for past sinning
In all who o'er the great deep take their ways.
They vow to amend their lives, and yet they don't,
Because if drowned, they can't - if spared, they won't.

VII

A crowd of shivering slaves of every nation
And age and sex were in the market ranged,
Each bevy with the merchant in his station.
Poor creatures! Their good looks were sadly changed.
All save the blacks seemed jaded with vexation,
From friends and home and freedom far estranged;
The Negroes more philosophy displayed,
Used to it, no doubt, as eels are to be flayed.

VIII

Juan was juvenile, and thus was full,
As most at his age are, of hope and health;
Yet I must own, he looked a little dull,
And now and then a tear stole down by stealth.
Perhaps his recent loss of blood might pull
His spirit down; and then the loss of wealth,
A mistress, and such comfortable quarters,
To be put up for auction amongst Tartars,

the Euxine... Symplegades ✧ The "Euxine"—meaning 'hospitable'—is an ancient Greek name (apparently ironic) for the Black Sea. In this stanza it provides Byron with one of his *best-ever revolting rhymes*. The "blue Symplegades" refers to two islands in the Sea of Marmara, at the southern entrance to the Bosphorus that supposedly could come together to crush ships.

the Giant's Grave ✧ A look-out point. Byron annotates this in the manuscript: "'The Giant's Grave' is a height on the shore of the Bosphorus – much frequented by holiday parties – like Harrow and Highgate."

The Parcae ✧ The Roman Fates (Greek Moirai): Clotho who spins the thread of life, Lachesis who measures it, Atropos who cuts it. "Time and the Three Fates" by Pieter Thijs

as eels are to be flayed ✧ Proverbial, but in fact an absurd insouciance as Byron's mordant use makes clear. The earliest known version appears in Sir Peter Beckford's 1781 work *Thoughts Upon Hunting*, where a girl replies to a man's concern about skinning live eels: "O not at all, sir," replied the girl, "they be used to it."

Tartars ✧ Probably not. Tartars are from Central Asia and were not likely found in the slave markets of Constantinople. Circassian and Georgian women, certainly.

IX

Were things to shake a stoic; ne'ertheless,
Upon the whole his carriage was serene.
His figure and the splendour of his dress,
Of which some gilded remnants still were seen,
Drew all eyes on him, giving them to guess
He was above the vulgar by his mien,
And then, though pale, he was so very handsome.
And then - they calculated on his ransom.

his carriage was serene ✧ Byron's Juan is on the whole impassive and undemonstrative, which makes his behaviour at the end of this Canto all the more comic.

X

Like a backgammon board the place was dotted
With whites and blacks in groups on show for sale,
Though rather more irregularly spotted;
Some bought the jet, while others chose the pale.
It chanced amongst the other people lotted,
A man of thirty, rather stout and hale,
With resolution in his dark grey eye,
Next Juan stood, till some might choose to buy.

a man of thirty, rather stout and hale ✧ Introduces Juan's English companion, later named Johnson, modelled according to ***PC*** on Byron's London boxing instructor, "Gentleman" John Jackson. His is a deliberate character type to set against Juan's more mercurial temperament.

XI

He had an English look; that is, was square
In make, of a complexion white and ruddy,
Good teeth, with curling rather dark brown hair,
And, it might be from thought or toil or study,
An open brow a little marked with care.
One arm had on a bandage rather bloody;
And there he stood with such sang-froid that greater
Could scarce be shown even by a mere spectator.

XII

But seeing at his elbow a mere lad,
Of a high spirit evidently, though
At present weighed down by a doom which had
O'erthrown even men, he soon began to show
A kind of blunt compassion for the sad
Lot of so young a partner in the woe,
Which for himself he seemed to deem no worse
Than any other scrape, a thing of course.

XIII

'My boy, ' said he, 'amidst this motley crew
Of Georgians, Russians, Nubians, and what not,
All ragamuffins differing but in hue,
With whom it is our luck to cast our lot,
The only gentlemen seem I and you,
So let us be acquainted, as we ought.
If I could yield you any consolation,
'Twould give me pleasure. Pray, what is your nation?'

XIV

When Juan answered, 'Spanish, ' he replied,
'I thought in fact you could not be a Greek;
Those servile dogs are not so proudly eyed.
Fortune has played you here a pretty freak,
But that's her way with all men till they're tried;
But never mind, she'll turn, perhaps, next week.
She has served me also much the same as you,
Except that I have found it nothing new.'

XV

'Pray, sir, ' said Juan, 'if I may presume,
What brought you here?' 'Oh nothing very rare.
Six Tartars and a drag-chain.' 'To this doom
But what conducted, if the question's fair,
Is that which I would learn.' 'I served for some
Months with the Russian army here and there
And taking lately, by Suwarrow's bidding,
A town, was ta'en myself instead of Widdin.'

XVI

'Have you no friends?' 'I had, but by God's blessing,
Have not been troubled with them lately. Now
I have answered all your questions without pressing,
And you an equal courtesy should show.'
'Alas, ' said Juan, "twere a tale distressing,
And long besides.' 'Oh if 'tis really so,
You're right on both accounts to hold your tongue;
A sad tale saddens doubly when 'tis long.

The only gentlemen... ✧ As opposed to those undifferentiated "ragamuffin" foreigners, Johnson asserts as a gesture of friendship that he and Juan (who, however, is a *Spaniard*) attain to a "gentleman's" superior status even in enslavement. Such imagined rank is an Englishman's last redoubt. Byron captures the comedy of this, but was himself rather touchy about his—narrowly secured—status as a Peer.

servile dogs ✧ A slur that is in character for Johnson. Greeks, under Ottoman rule, were frequently associated by Northern Europeans with compromise and accommodation rather than martial pride. Although Byron was to die at Missolonghi in 1824 fighting for Greek independence, and his feelings about modern Greeks were always complicated: admiration mixed with frequent frustration during his 1809–11 travels.

Suwarrow... Widdin ✧ Alexander Suvorov (1730–1800), the Russian field marshal was arguably the greatest European commander of his era; ruthless with a common-touch, well-known to Byron's readers. Widdin (modern Vidin, on the Danube) was a major Ottoman fortress that held out against Suvorov in 1787. Johnson, fighting for the Russians, was taken by the Ottomans instead. This is the first hint we have of a date for the events in ***Don⚔Juan***

'twere a tale distressing ✧ Juan's reluctance echoes the classical epic introduction to the Hero's backstory : Aeneas, for example, replies to Dido's invitation to tell how he escaped Troy and came to Carthage with "*Infandum, regina, iubes renovare dolorem*" (Aeneid II.3) that is: "You command me, Queen, to renew an unspeakable grief...". Something similar is found in the *Odyssey*.

XVII

'But droop not; Fortune at your time of life,
Although a female moderately fickle,
Will hardly leave you (as she's not your wife)
For any length of days in such a pickle.
To strive too with our fate were such a strife
As if the corn-sheaf should oppose the sickle.
Men are the sport of circumstances, when
The circumstances seem the sport of men.'

THE CORN-SHEAF SHOULD OPPOSE THE SICKLE ✧ Byron seems to recall a phrase from Deuteronomy XVI:9 about the Mosaic liturgical calendar: "begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn."

MEN ARE THE SPORT OF CIRCUMSTANCES ✧ Johnson gives Juan classic stoic advice (cf. *Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus*) in one of Byron's happiest epigrams.

XVIII

' 'Tis not, ' said Juan, 'for my present doom
I mourn, but for the past; I loved a maid.'
He paused, and his dark eye grew full of gloom;
A single tear upon his eyelash stayed
A moment and then dropped. 'But to resume,
'Tis not my present lot, as I have said,
Which I deplore so much; for I have borne
Hardships which have the hardiest overworn

XIX

'On the rough deep. But this last blow -'and here
He stopped again and turned away his face.
'Ay, ' quoth his friend, 'I thought it would appear
That there had been a lady in the case;
And these are things which ask a tender tear,
Such as I too would shed if in your place.
I cried upon my first wife's dying day,
And also when my second ran away.

ON THE ROUGH DEEP ✧ Refers to the long-boat episode in Canto II

QUOTH HIS FRIEND ✧ Byron intends the archaic, mock-heroic register of Johnson's speech to give him a sort of hearty, buff character: a genuine soldier-of-fortune and a counsellor for Juan. It sort of works, although it does not sit easily with Byron's ironic characterisations elsewhere in the poem. The *men* in ***Don⚔Juan***, not excepting Juan, have all the depth of cardboard "cut-out" figures. Here, Byron attempts something different with Johnson and *almost* succeeds.

XX

'My third -' ' Your third!' quoth Juan, turning round,
'You scarcely can be thirty, have you three?'
' No, only two at present above ground.
Surely 'tis nothing wonderful to see
One person thrice in holy wedlock bound.'
'Well then your third, ' said Juan, 'what did she?
She did not run away too, did she, sir?'
'No, faith.' 'What then?' 'I ran away from her.'

I RAN AWAY FROM HER ✧ Annabella Milbanke, Byron's (only) wife 'ran away' from him in 1816 after less than a year of their catastrophic marriage, taking their daughter Ada Lovelace with her. Byron never saw either again.

XXI

' You take things coolly, sir, ' said Juan. 'Why, '
Replied the other, 'what can a man do?
There still are many rainbows in your sky,
But mine have vanished. All, when life is new,
Commence with feelings warm and prospects high;
But time strips our illusions of their hue,
And one by one in turn, some grand mistake
Casts off its bright skin yearly like the snake.

But mine have vanished ✧ Juan has just observed that (the still un-named) Johnson "scarcely can be thirty" so this sounds more *melodramatic* than Byron likely intended.

XXII

"Tis true, it gets another bright and fresh,
Or fresher, brighter; but the year gone through,
This skin must go the way too of all flesh
Or sometimes only wear a week or two.
Love's the first net which spreads its deadly mesh;
Ambition, avarice, vengeance, glory glue
The glittering lime-twigs of our latter days,
Where still we flutter on for pence or praise.'

glittering lime-twigs of our latter days ✧ Lime-twigs are branches smeared with birdlime–any of several sticky, glutinous substances–to catch small birds. "Glittering lime-twigs" is not one of Byron's most successful metaphors.

XXIII

'All this is very fine and may be true, '
Said Juan, 'but I really don't see how
It betters present times with me or you.'
'No?' quoth the other, 'yet you will allow
By setting things in their right point of view,
Knowledge at least is gained; for instance, now
We know what slavery is, and our disasters
May teach us better to behave when masters.'

We know what slavery is ✧ Both Byron and, especially, his wife Annabelle were known for their abolitionist views in the the slave trade debates of the 1810s–20s (which sought to extend the Atlantic slave trade ban of 1807 to a complete ban throughout the Empire). So it's odd that Byron has Johnson say it takes personal experience to know "what slavery means". The lesson he draws – that it teaches how to be a better slave master – is not what we'd expect to hear from an abolitionist either.

XXIV

'Would we were masters now, if but to try
Their present lessons on our pagan friends here, '
Said Juan, swallowing a heart-burning sigh.
'Heaven help the scholar whom his fortune sends here!'
'Perhaps we shall be one day, by and by, '
Rejoined the other, 'when our bad luck mends here.
Meantime (yon old black eunuch seems to eye us)
I wish to God that somebody would buy us.

Heaven help the scholar ✧ Juan re-interprets the word "masters", switching from the context of slave-ownership to that of education; Juan would like to teach his captors a lesson or two by reversing roles. But, he thinks, no educator (or "scholar") would like to test his luck delivering such lessons while in chains in the slave-market. A slightly tortured witticism

yon old black eunuch ✧ This is Baba, who will play an important role in this Canto.

XXV

'But after all what is our present state?
'Tis bad and may be better - all men's lot.
Most men are slaves, none more so than the great,
To their own whims and passions and what not.
Society itself, which should create
Kindness, destroys what little we had got.
To feel for none is the true social art
Of the world's stoics - men without a heart.'

Most men are slaves. . . ✧ A Stoic commonplace (cf. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales 47*)

the world's stoics — men without a heart ✧ Not at all! See Seneca's letter referenced above in which he discusses the proper, humane treatment of slaves. This is Byron's mischievous recasting of stoic detachment – hardiness to misfortune – as a mere emotional insufficiency.

XXVI

Just now a black old neutral personage
Of the third sex stepped up and peering over
The captives, seemed to mark their looks and age
And capabilities, as to discover
If they were fitted for the purposed cage.
No lady e'er is ogled by a lover,
Horse by a blackleg, broadcloth by a tailor,
Fee by a counsel, felon by a jailor,

black old neutral personage ✧ Baba is a eunuch and harem guard probably from sub-Sahran Africa. Such individuals were castrated as boys before entering into palace service not only to prevent sexual interference with the sultan's concubines, but because eunuchs offered no dynastic threat to the Sultans. White European eunuchs or *hadim* did not serve in the *seraglio* but frequently held powerful administrative and military offices in the 15th and 16th centuries. The employment of eunuchs continued well into the late 18th century, although by then, as ***PC*** shows, eunuch harem guards had become uncommon and an expensive luxury.

blackleg ✧ period slang for a racing swindler or cardsharp; B. enjoys mixing the raffish with the respectable (tailor, counsel, jailor) for comic effect.

XXVII

As is a slave by his intended bidder.
'Tis pleasant purchasing our fellow creatures,
And all are to be sold, if you consider
Their passions and are dextrous. Some by features
Are bought up, others by a warlike leader,
Some by a place, as tend their years or natures,
The most by ready cash; but all have prices
From crowns to kicks according to their vices.

Tis pleasant purchasing our fellow creatures ✧ The bland, ironic tone is the point. Byron again takes up the Seneca's point (Stanza XXIII) that even "free" men are slaves to their passions.

From crowns to kicks ✧ A double pun 'Crowns" meaning both 5-shilling coins and royal power; "kicks" meaning both a blow with the foot and a sixpence.

XXVIII

The eunuch, having eyed them o'er with care,
Turned to the merchant and begun to bid,
First but for one, and after for the pair.
They haggled, wrangled, swore too - so they did!
As though they were in a mere Christian fair
Cheapening an ox, an ass, a lamb, or kid
So that their bargain sounded like a battle
For this superior yoke of human cattle.

Cheapening ✧ An archaic use: to bid for or bargain. Ultimately from the latin *caupo*, a shopkeeper or huckster.

XXIX

At last they settled into simple grumbling
And pulling out reluctant purses and
Turning each piece of silver o'er and tumbling
Some down and weighing others in their hand,
And by mistake sequins with paras jumbling,
Until the sum was accurately scanned,
And then the merchant giving change and signing
Receipts in full, began to think of dining.

Sequins with paras jumbling ✧ Market haggling with Ottoman coins. The *sequin*: a gold ducat widely circulated in the Levant. The *para*: a small copper Ottoman coin, 40 to the piastre.

XXX

I wonder if his appetite was good
Or if it were, if also his digestion.
Methinks at meals some odd thoughts might intrude,
And conscience ask a curious sort of question
About the right divine how far we should
Sell flesh and blood. When dinner has oppress one,
I think it is perhaps the gloomiest hour
Which turns up out of the sad twenty-four.

His digestion ✒ Byron suffered from indigestion all his life; perhaps exacerbated by extreme diets (when he thought he was putting on weight) and large quantities of alcohol. The malady turns up several times in ***Don⚔Juan***, notably Canto IX, 14–15 where Byron quotes his favourite, Horace, on its agonies. It's possible that an insulin "overshoot" after a large meal such as he describes in Stanza XXXII might have made him feel depressed after eating. The image is *Reclining Turk Smoking a Hookah* by Henri Baron, 1844

XXXI

Voltaire says 'No'; he tells you that Candide
Found life most tolerable after meals.
He's wrong; unless man were a pig, indeed,
Repletion rather adds to what he feels,
Unless he's drunk, and then no doubt he's freed
From his own brain's oppression while it reels.
Of food I think with Philip's son, or rather
Ammon's (ill pleased with one world and one father);

Philip's son, Ammon, Alexander ✧ Alexander the Great claimed divine descent from Ammon (the Egyptian-Libyan supreme god) rather than from his mortal father Philip II of Macedon — a claim encouraged by the oracle at Siwah (331 BC), and politically convenient after his conquest of Egypt, but domestically resented.

XXXII

I think with Alexander that the act
Of eating, with another act or two,
Makes us feel our mortality in fact
Redoubled. When a roast and a ragout
And fish and soup, by some side dishes backed,
Can give us either pain or pleasure, who
Would pique himself on intellects, whose use
Depends so much upon the gastric juice?

Eating, with another act or two ✧ Plutarch, in a well-known passage from his "Life of Alexander" (ch. 22) writes: "And he used to say that sleep and sexual intercourse, more than anything else, made him conscious that he was mortal, implying that both weariness and pleasure arise from one and the same natural weakness". Byron is twisting the idea slightly here to substitute "eating" for sleep. He no doubt expects his educated reader to recognise the original and appreciate the deflection. Byron enthusiastically indulged both passions, although, like Plutarch's Alexander, he had a complex relationship with both.

XXXIII

The other evening ('twas on Friday last) -
This is a fact and no poetic fable -
Just as my greatcoat was about me cast,
My hat and gloves still lying on the table,
I heard a shot - 'twas eight o'clock scarce past -
And running out as fast as I was able,
I found the military commandant
Stretched in the street and able scarce to pant.

XXXIV

Poor fellow! For some reason, surely bad,
They had slain him with five slugs and left him there
To perish on the pavement; so I had
Him borne into the house and up the stair
And stripped and looked to. But why should I add
More circumstances? Vain was every care;
The man was gone; in some Italian quarrel
Killed by five bullets from an old gun barrel.

XXXV

I gazed upon him, for I knew him well;
And though I have seen many corpses, never
Saw one, whom such an accident befell,
So calm. Though pierced through stomach, heart, and liver,
He seemed to sleep, for you could scarcely tell
(As he bled inwardly, no hideous river
Of gore divulged the cause) that he was dead;
So as I gazed on him, I thought or said,

XXXVI

'Can this be death? Then what is life or death?
Speak!' but he spoke not. 'Wake!' but still he slept.
'But yesterday and who had mightier breath?
A thousand warriors by his word were kept
In awe. He said as the centurion saith,
"Go,"and he goeth; "come, " and forth he stepped.
The trump and bugle till he spake were dumb,
And now nought left him but the muffled drum.'

THE MILITARY COMMANDANT Byron "button-holes" us with a news-bulletin: a sort of post-card from Ravenna, dated 8 Dec. 1820. It's not just another digression: Byron inserted this passage weeks after completing his first draft of the poem. He tells of the assassination the local military commander Luigi dal Pinto, near his house and of his 'taking command' of the situation. The corpse, lying on his servant's (Fletcher's) bed becomes the occasion for some puzzling on the physical reality of death and the mysterious entry—if it is—to the after-life. But the corpse offers no answers, of course, and B. turns, equally abruptly, back to his fiction in Stanza XL. We may be tempted to treat the interruption of "real life" (or rather *real death*) as just another digression but, as the critic Bernard Beatty argued, Byron gives us here a portent of the fate of the poem; the mirror on which we have been fixed. For Juan's charmed narrative, like the Commander's, never concludes but ends abruptly, refusing further interrogation or explanation, in Canto XVII, with a death: Byron's. "Portrait of a Carabinieri', Felix Nussbaum

XXXVII

And they who waited once and worshipped, they
With their rough faces thronged about the bed
To gaze once more on the commanding clay,
Which for the last though not the first time bled.
And such an end! That he who many a day
Had faced Napoleon's foes until they fled,
The foremost in the charge or in the sally,
Should now be butchered in a civic alley.

XXXVIII

The scars of his old wounds were near his new,
Those honourable scars which brought him fame;
And horrid was the contrast to the view.
But let me quit the theme; as such things claim
Perhaps even more attention than is due
From me. I gazed (as oft I have gazed the same)
To try if I could wrench aught out of death
Which should confirm or shake or make a faith;

XXXIX

But it was all a mystery. Here we are,
And there we go, but where? Five bits of lead,
Or three or two or one send very far!
And is this blood then formed but to be shed?
Can every element our elements mar?
And air - earth - water - fire live - and we dead?
We, whose minds comprehend all things? No more;
But let us to the story as before.

XL

The purchaser of Juan and acquaintance
Bore off his bargains to a gilded boat,
Embarked himself and them, and off they went thence
As fast as oars could pull and water float.
They looked like persons being led to sentence,
Wondering what next, till the caque was brought
Up in a little creek below a wall
O'ertopped with cypresses dark green and tall.

caque ✧ A note to the manuscript, possibly by Bryon, says: "The light and elegant wherries playing about the quays of Constantinople are so called."

XLI

Here their conductor tapping at the wicket
Of a small iron door, 'twas opened, and
He led them onward, first through a low thicket
Flanked by large groves, which towered on either hand.
They almost lost their way and had to pick it,
For night was closing ere they came to land.
The eunuch made a sign to those on board,
Who rowed off, leaving them without a word.

XLII

As they were plodding on their winding way
Through orange bowers and jasmine and so forth
(Of which I might have a good deal to say,
There being no such profusion in the North
Of oriental plants et cetera,
But that of late your scribblers think it worth
Their while to rear whole hotbeds in their works
Because one poet travelled 'mongst the Turks) –

your scribblers ✧ (B. inserts a parenthetical diversion that takes up most of the stanza so that it ends in a dash and continues into the following stanza.) Orientalism had been a poetic, and painterly, fashion for decades. Robert Southey and B.'s friend Thomas Moore published eastern tales before Byron himself took it up enthusiastically in *The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair & Lara* between 1813 and 1816, becoming a master of the genre. The poems consolidated B.s' fame after the publication of *Childe Harold* in 1812: it is in them rather than in the *Childe* that the classic 'Byronic' hero — whose character Juan deflates —first emerges. ***PC*** has an illuminating essay on the Turkish Tales on his (posthumous) website.

XLIII

As they were threading on their way, there came
Into Don Juan's head a thought, which he
Whispered to his companion. 'Twas the same
Which might have then occurred to you or me.
'Methinks, ' said he, 'it would be no great shame
If we should strike a stroke to set us free.
Let's knock that old black fellow on the head
And march away. 'Twere easier done than said.'

XLIV

'Yes, ' said the other, 'and when done, what then?
How get out? How the devil got we in?
And when we once were fairly out, and when
From Saint Bartholomew we have saved our skin,
Tomorrow'd see us in some other den
And worse off than we hitherto have been.
Besides, I'm hungry and just now would take,
Like Esau, for my birthright a beefsteak.

From Saint Bartholomew ✧ Saint Bartholomew, one of the Twelve Apostles, was traditionally said to have been flayed alive as his martyrdom. The legend appears in the *Golden Legend* and in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* on the Altar wall of the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican where Saint Peter sits on a cloud, with Bartholomew's skin (Michaelangelo's self-portrait) in one hand, and his keys in the other.

Like Esau ✧ *Genesis* 25:29–34: Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for "a mess of pottage" (a stew of lentils). Johnson improves on the biblical original by substituting a beefsteak — a substitution that underlines his phlegmatic national character.

XLV

'We must be near some place of man's abode,
For the old Negro's confidence in creeping
With his two captives by so queer a road
Shows that he thinks his friends have not been sleeping.
A single cry would bring them all abroad.
'Tis therefore better looking before leaping,
And there, you see, this turn has brought us through.
By Jove, a noble palace - lighted too.'

LOOKING BEFORE LEAPING ✧ The proverb dates from one of William Tyndale's homilies (1528) and was already a cliché by Byron's time.

XLVI

It was indeed a wide extensive building
Which opened on their view, and o'er the front
There seemed to be besprent a deal of gilding
And various hues, as is the Turkish wont,
A gaudy taste, for they are little skilled in
The arts of which these lands were once the font.
Each villa on the Bosphorus looks a screen
New painted or a pretty opera scene.

BESPRENT ✧ An archaism: sprinkled, sprayed or strewn with

THE TURKISH WONT ✧ Byron's dismissal of Ottoman taste—hypocritical for a poet whose fame still rested on so much popular *poésie à la Turque* in the mid 18-teens—sets up a theme he will develop through several stanzas: the contrast between the classical Greek and Byzantine artistic heritage of Constantinople and the Ottoman aesthetic that replaced it.

XLVII

And nearer as they came, a genial savour
Of certain stews and roast meats and pilaus,
Things which in hungry mortals' eyes find favour,
Made Juan in his harsh intentions pause
And put himself upon his good behaviour.
His friend too, adding a new saving clause,
Said, 'In heaven's name let's get some supper now,
And then I'm with you, if you're for a row.'

AND NEARER AS THEY CAME ✧ ***PC*** notes: "*B. had been near where Juan and Johnson now are: on July 10 1810, when he and Hobhouse accompanied Sir Robert Adair, the English Ambassador, to the Seraglio for an audience with Sultan Mahmoud II. The English party, passing through the Executioner's Lodge, were forced humiliatingly to wait until 4,000 Janissaries had been given their morning pilau. Thence they moved into the second square of the Seraglio, with the kitchens to their right, where they were again made to feel peripheral by watching the Janissaries being paid. The Harem itself was just out of sight, behind the Divan wall, on the west side of the Seraglio complex. The combination of claustrophobia, humiliation and mouth-watering kitchen smells seems to be one which B. is recollecting in these stanzas.*". Note to Canto V of his edition of ***Don⚔Juan***

XLVIII

Some talk of an appeal unto some passion,
Some to men's feelings, others to their reason.
The last of these was never much the fashion,
For reason thinks all reasoning out of season.
Some speakers whine, and others lay the lash on,
But more or less continue still to tease on,
With arguments according to their forte,
But no one ever dreams of being short.

FORTE ✧ There are two or three words with this spelling but different pronunciations. The most common, now, are a musical term meaning a loud(ly), or a term for a personal strength or excellence, usually pronounced as if the "e" were an e-acute (é) or even a "y". A third meaning, no doubt familiar to Byron is a term from fencing and refers the stronger part of a sword blade. It is pronounced in the way that makes this rhyme—and B.'s clever thrust—work. But, we'll soon learn that B. pronounced *forte* meaning strength this way, too.

XLIX

But I digress; of all appeals - although
I grant the power of pathos and of gold,
Of beauty, flattery, threats, a shilling - no
Method's more sure at moments to take hold
Of the best feelings of mankind, which grow
More tender as we everyday behold,
Than that all-softening, overpowering knell,
The tocsin of the soul - the dinner bell.

The tocsin of the soul ✧ A *tocsin* is an alarm bell, rung to summon citizens to arms or to warn of danger. It's not obvious how to reconcile this humorous praise of the moral suasion of dining with B.'s earlier complaints about the "oppression" of dinner (Stanza XXX). Still, Juan is not heading for dinner—however much he might want it—so the antithesis does not get tested here.

L

Turkey contains no bells, and yet men dine.
And Juan and his friend, albeit they heard
No Christian knoll to table, saw no line
Of lackeys usher to the feast prepared,
Yet smelt roast meat, beheld a huge fire shine,
And cooks in motion with their clean arms bared,
And gazed around them to the left and right
With the prophetic eye of appetite.

Turkey contains no bells ✧ Bells were — and technically still are — prohibited in Islamic tradition. The call to prayer (*adhan*) is vocal, not instrumental.

LI

And giving up all notions of resistance,
They followed close behind their sable guide,
Who little thought that his own cracked existence
Was on the point of being set aside.
He motioned them to stop at some small distance,
And knocking at the gate, 'twas opened wide,
And a magnificent large hall displayed
The Asian pomp of Ottoman parade.

his own cracked existence ✧ As a eunuch, Baba is "cracked" in the sense of physically broken or damaged. The word also recalls the description of the *musico* (the castrato) in the opera company of Canto IV as "but a cracked old basin" (IV.st.86).

LII

I won't describe; description is my forte,
But every fool describes in these bright days
His wondrous journey to some foreign court
And spawns his quarto and demands your praise.
Death to his publisher, to him 'tis sport,
While Nature, tortured twenty thousand ways,
Resigns herself with exemplary patience
To guidebooks, rhymes, tours, sketches, illustrations.

description is my forte ✧ From the *second* use of this word as a rhyme within 4 stanzas we learn that B. wants us to pronounce it without the accented "e" *also* when it means "strength".

Death to his publisher ✧ Read: "[*Although*] death to his publisher. . . " etc.

LIII

Along this hall and up and down, some, squatted
Upon their hams, were occupied at chess,
Others in monosyllable talk chatted,
And some seemed much in love with their own dress,
And divers smoked superb pipes decorated
With amber mouths of greater price or less,
And several strutted, others slept, and some
Prepared for supper with a glass of rum.

WITH A GLASS OF RUM ✧ Byron's own note to this verse: "*In Turkey nothing is more common than for the Mussulmans to take several glasses of strong Spirits by way of Appetizer. – I have seen them take as many as six of Raki before dinner, and swear that they dined the better for it...*"

LIV

As the black eunuch entered with his brace
Of purchased infidels, some raised their eyes
A moment without slackening from their pace,
But those who sate ne'er stirred in anywise.
One or two stared the captives in the face,
Just as one views a horse to guess his price;
Some nodded to the Negro from their station,
But no one troubled him with conversation.

DINNER AT THE PALACE ✒ An Italian ambassador is received by the Sultan's Grand Vizier, by Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, about 1725

LV

He leads them through the hall, and without stopping
On through a farther range of goodly rooms,
Splendid but silent, save in one, where, dropping,
A marble fountain echoes through the glooms
Of night, which robe the chamber, or where popping,
Some female head most curiously presumes
To thrust its black eyes through the door or lattice,
As wondering what the devil noise that is.

SPLENDID BUT SILENT ✧ European travellers commented on the enforced silence of the Seraglio where any loud conversation or noise was immediately punished by guards as disrespectful to the Sultan.

LVI

Some faint lamps gleaming from the lofty walls
Gave light enough to hint their farther way,
But not enough to show the imperial halls
In all the flashing of their full array.
Perhaps there's nothing - I'll not say appals,
But saddens more by night as well as day
Than an enormous room without a soul
To break the lifeless splendour of the whole.

LVII

Two or three seem so little, one seems nothing.
In deserts, forests, crowds, or by the shore,
There solitude, we know, has her full growth in
The spots which were her realms forevermore;
But in a mighty hall or gallery, both in
More modern buildings and those built of yore,
A kind of death comes o'er us all alone,
Seeing what's meant for many with but one.

More modern buildings ✧ Byron's complaint on the isolation we fell in enormous empty spaces (or in crowds) still has an echo, of course, in cold and cavernous contemporary architecture: airport halls and reception/elevator lobbies, for example. He may also be recalling his childhood spent in the draughty, half-ruined Newstead Abbey.

LVIII

A neat, snug study on a winter's night,
A book, friend, single lady, or a glass
Of claret, sandwich, and an appetite
Are things which make an English evening pass,
Though certes by no means so grand a sight
As is a theatre lit up by gas.
I pass my evenings in long galleries solely,
And that's the reason I'm so melancholy.

a theatre lit up by gas ✧ The Lyceum Theatre (later known as the English Opera House) was the first in the London theatre district to introduce gas lighting over the entire stage in August 1817 followed a month later by The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and Covent Garden.

in long galleries solely ✧ This seems to be a joke about evenings spent without Therésa in a *mezzanine* apartment of the Palazzo Guiccioli in Ravenna. Byron rented a floor from the Count, who lived upstairs with his wife: Byron's *inamorata*. This Count was, of course, well aware of his wife's relationship with Byron but allowed the discrete cohabitation to continue for 22 months until October 1821 when he denounced Byron as a collaborator with the *Carbonari* revolutionaries and B. was forced to flee to Pisa where T. later joined him.

LIX

Alas, man makes that great which makes him little.
I grant you in a church 'tis very well;
What speaks of Heaven should by no means be brittle,
But strong and lasting, till no tongue can tell
Their names who reared it, but huge houses fit ill -
And huge tombs worse - mankind, since Adam fell.
Methinks the story of the tower of Babel
Might teach them this much better than I'm able.

the tower of Babel ✧ The Tower of Babel, i.e. Babylon (*Genesis 11*) is the anti-cathedral: belittling man rather than lifting him up.

LX

Babel was Nimrod's hunting box, and then
A town of gardens, walls, and wealth amazing,
Where Nabuchadonosor, king of men,
Reigned, till one summer's day he took to grazing,
And Daniel tamed the lions in their den,
The people's awe and admiration raising.
'Twas famous too for Thisbe and for Pyramus
And the calumniated Queen Semiramis.

Babel. . . Semiramis ✧ This stanza is a jumble of Bablyon's semi-mythical history as told in *Genesis* & *Daniel* that rushes headlong to the name of her fabled Queen—a possible precursor of the Sultana and the Empress whom Juan has yet to meet. Byron uses the garbled Greek translation of the inaccurate Hebrew adaptation of the Akkadian name of the remarkable Babylonian monarch Nabu-kudurri-usur, cursed in the Book of Daniel for having destroyed Solomon's temple during his 6th century BCE capture of Jerusalem.

LXI

That injured queen, by chroniclers so coarse,
Has been accused (I doubt not by conspiracy)
Of an improper friendship for her horse
(Love like religion sometimes runs to heresy).
This monstrous tale had probably its source
(For such exaggerations here and there I see)
In writing 'courser' by mistake for 'courier'.
I wish the case could come before a jury here.

LXII

But to resume. Should there be (what may not
Be in these days?) some infidels, who don't,
Because they can't, find out the very spot
Of that same Babel, or because they won't
(Though Claudius Rich, Esquire, some bricks has got
And written lately two memoirs upon't)
Believe the Jews, those unbelievers, who
Must be believed, though they believe not you.

LXIII

Yet let them think that Horace has exprest
Shortly and sweetly the masonic folly
Of those, forgetting the great place of rest,
Who give themselves to architecture wholly.
We know where things and men must end at best,
A moral (like all morals) melancholy,
And et sepulcri immemor struis domos
Shows that we build when we should but entomb us.

LXIV

At last they reached a quarter most retired,
Where echo woke as if from a long slumber.
Though full of all things which could be desired,
One wondered what to do with such a number
Of articles which nobody required.
Here wealth had done its utmost to encumber
With furniture an exquisite apartment,
Which puzzled Nature much to know what art meant.

An improper friendship for her horse ✧ The alleged lusty seductress of Babylon (and conqueror of much of Asia) was accused of all kinds of sexual transgressions by later authors but chiefly incest with her son and, according to Pliny's *Natural History* (VIII.64), copulation with her horse. B. shamelessly uses the "improper friendship" euphemism to link the history of Semiramis to the scandalous contemporary trial (1820) before the House of Lords of George IV's Queen Caroline, grossly humiliated in public by her husband's accusation of "licentious intercourse" with her courier and chamberlain (Caroline was acquitted). B. jokes that in Semiramis' case, too, the *friendship* was more likely to have been with her 'courier' than 'courser'.

Claudius Rich, Esquire ✧ Claudius James Rich (1787–1820) was the East India Company's Resident at Baghdad and one of the first Europeans to survey the ruins of Babylon systematically. He published *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* (1815) and a *Second Memoir on Babylon* (1818). Byron's tone is condescendingly jocular, but Rich was in fact a brilliant Orientalist who died of cholera in Shiraz in 1820, about the time Byron wrote this stanza.

though they believe not you ✧ Byron, a notorious debtor while in London and until the sale of Newstead Abbey in 1818, was casually spiteful about his creditors especially Jewish financiers. If they did not believe him it was likely with good reason.

et sepulcri immemor struis domos ✧ From Horace, *Odes* II.18, ll. 15–22: "*truditur dies die, / novaeque pergunt interire lunae. / tu secanda marmora / locas sub ipsum funus et sepulchri / immemor struis domos*" — "Day treads on day, and new moons hasten to their waning; yet you, on the brink of the grave, contract for marble slabs and, forgetful of the tomb, rear a palace." Byron's gloss on the last line of the stanza captures Horace's point exactly. The "masonic folly" is the folly of builders (*mason* = builder); *probably* not a reference to the Freemasons.

LXV

It seemed, however, but to open on
A range or suite of further chambers, which
Might lead to heaven knows where, but in this one
The moveables were prodigally rich:
Sofas 'twas half a sin to sit upon,
So costly were they; carpets every stitch
Of workmanship so rare, they made you wish
You could glide o'er them like a golden fish.

LXVI

The black, however, without hardly deigning
A glance at that which wrapt the slaves in wonder,
Trampled what they scarce trod for fear of staining,
As if the milky way their feet was under
With all its stars; and with a stretch attaining
A certain press or cupboard niched in yonder
In that remote recess, which you may see,
Or if you don't the fault is not in me -

LXVII

I wish to be perspicuous. And the black,
I say, unlocking the recess, pulled forth
A quantity of clothes fit for the back
Of any Mussulman, whate'er his worth,
And of variety there was no lack,
And yet though I have said there was no dearth,
He chose himself to point out what he thought
Most proper for the Christians he had bought.

LXVIII

The suit he thought most suitable to each
Was, for the elder and the stouter, first
A candiote cloak, which to the knee might reach,
And trousers not so tight that they would burst,
But such as fit an Asiatic breech,
A shawl, whose folds in Cahmere had been nurst,
Slippers of saffron, dagger rich and handy;
In short, all things which form a Turkish dandy.

CANDIOTE CLOAK ✧ A cloak from Candia (Crete).

LXIX

While he was dressing, Baba, their black friend,
Hinted the vast advantages which they
Might probably obtain both in the end,
If they would but pursue the proper way
Which Fortune plainly seemed to recommend;
And then he added that he needs must say
'Twould greatly tend to better their condition,
If they would condescend to circumcision.

Baba, their black friend ✧ The eunuch's name derives most probably from Babalalouk, the comical chief eunuch in William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), one of Byron's favourite books. The name also means "father" in Turkish — an ironic title for a castrated man.

condescend to circumcision ✧ Circumcision was, and is, a requirement for conversion to Islam.

LXX

For his own part, he really should rejoice
To see them true believers, but no less
Would leave his proposition to their choice.
The other, thanking him for this excess
Of goodness, in thus leaving them a voice
In such a trifle, scarcely could express
Sufficiently (he said) his approbation
Of all the customs of this polished nation.

The other ✧ That is, Johnson, still not named.

LXXI

For his own share, he saw but small objection
To so respectable an ancient rite;
And after swallowing down a slight refection,
For which he owned a present appetite,
He doubted not a few hours of reflection
Would reconcile him to the business quite.
'Will it?' said Juan sharply, 'Strike me dead
But they as soon shall circumcise my head!

LXXII

'Cut off a thousand heads, before - ' 'Now, pray, '
Replied the other, 'do not interrupt
You put me out in what I had to say.
Sir, as I said, as soon as I have supt,
I shall perpend if your proposal may
Be such as I can properly accept,
Provided always your great goodness still
Remits the matter to our own free will.'

perpend ✧ Ponder, weigh, consider. Johnson's ironic, insincere diplomatic trifling with the idea of circumcision plays for time while Juan, a simple, upright, action-figure, is incapable of any wile or deceit, even if it means his head. The to-and-fro with Baba, alternately polite and menacing, comprises some of the finest comic dialog in the poem.

LXXIII

Baba eyed Juan and said, 'Be so good
As dress yourself and pointed out a suit
In which a princess with great pleasure would
Array her limbs; but Juan standing mute,
As not being in a masquerading mood,
Gave it a slight kick with his Christian foot,
And when the old Negro told him to 'Get ready,'
Replied, 'Old gentleman, I'm not a lady.'

LXXIV

'What you may be, I neither know nor care, '
Said Baba, 'but pray do as I desire;
I have no more time nor many words to spare.'
'At least, ' said Juan, 'sure I may inquire
The cause of this odd travesty.' 'Forbear, '
Said Baba, 'to be curious. Twill transpire
No doubt in proper place and time and season;
I have no authority to tell the reason.'

LXXV

'Then if I do, ' said Juan, 'I'll be - ' 'Hold!'
Rejoined the Negro, 'pray be not provoking;
This spirit's well, but it may wax too bold,
And you will find us not too fond of joking.'
'What, sir, ' said Juan, 'shall it e'er be told
That I unsexed my dress?' But Baba, stroking
The things down, said, ' Incense me and I call
Those who will leave you of no sex at all.

LXXVI

'I offer you a handsome suit of clothes,
A woman's, true, but then there is a cause
Why you should wear them.' 'What, though my soul loathes
The effeminate garb?' Thus after a short pause,
Sighed Juan, muttering also some slight oaths,
'What the devil shall I do with all this gauze?'
Thus he profanely termed the finest lace
Which e'er set off a marriage-morning face.

A visit to a Harem ❧ The interior of an Ottoman harem by Henriette Browne, 1860 — one of the few paintings by a woman artist who actually gained access to a harem.

no sex at all ✧ During the entire Harem episode Juan, dressed as a woman, find himself in an ambiguous role; both male and female, free and enslaved. Meanwhile Baba threatens castration while "stroking down" the silk garments, unmistakeably suggesting a sensual pleasure at the idea.

LXXVII

And then he swore, and sighing, on he slipped
A pair of trousers of flesh-coloured silk;
Next with a virgin zone he was equipped,
Which girt a slight chemise as white as milk.
But tugging on his petticoat he tripped,
Which, as we say, or as the Scotch say, whilk
(The rhyme obliges me to this; sometimes
Monarchs are less imperative than rhymes) -

A VIRGIN ZONE ✧ The "virgin zone" in classical Greek tradition was the belt (*zōnē*) that a bride loosened on her wedding night — its removal symbolised the loss of virginity. Byron applies it to Juan in drag, creating a comic layering of gender confusion like the lace (previous stanza) that offsets the face of a bride, flushed with sexual experience, on the morning after.

IMPERATIVE ✧ Monarchs are **imperious** (from *imperium*, rule) but rhymes are **imperative** (from *imperativus*, a grammatical mood expressing command or exhortation)

LXXVIII

Whilk, which (or what you please) was owing to
His garment's novelty, and his being awkward;
And yet at last he managed to get through
His toilet, though no doubt a little backward.
The Negro Baba helped a little too,
When some untoward part of raiment stuck hard;
And wrestling both his arms into a gown,
He paused and took a survey up and down.

LXXIX

One difficulty still remained; his hair
Was hardly long enough, but Baba found
So many false long tresses all to spare
That soon his head was most completely crowned,
After the manner then in fashion there.
And this addition with such gems was bound
As suited the ensemble of his toilet,
While Baba made him comb his head and oil it.

LXXX

And now being femininely all arrayed,
With some small aid from scissors, paint, and tweezers,
He looked in almost all respects a maid,
And Baba smilingly exclaimed, 'You see, sirs,
A perfect transformation here displayed.
And now then, you must come along with me, sirs,
That is, the lady.' Clapping his hands twice,
Four blacks were at his elbow in a trice.

IN ALMOST ALL RESPECTS A MAID ✧ Byron continues to toy with an androgynous character for Juan whose almost-feminine beauty—his "half-girlish face"—caused Antonia to puzzle at Julia's "taste" in Canto I (Stanza CLXXI). Some self-reference is likely. Lady Caroline Lamb is said to have noted in her diary (1812) shortly after meeting Byron for the first time "That beautiful pale face will be my fate".

LXXXI

'You, sir, ' said Baba, nodding to the one,
'Will please to accompany those gentlemen
To supper; but you, worthy Christian nun,
Will follow me. No trifling, sir, for when
I say a thing, it must at once be done.
What fear you? Think you this a lion's den?
Why, 'tis a palace, where the truly wise
Anticipate the Prophet's paradise.

LXXXII

'You fool! I tell you no one means you harm.'
'So much the better, ' Juan said, 'for them;
Else they shall feel the weight of this my arm,
Which is not quite so light as you may deem.
I yield thus far, but soon will break the charm
If any take me for that which I seem,
So that I trust for everybody's sake
That this disguise may lead to no mistake.'

LXXXIII

'Blockhead! come on and see, ' quoth Baba, while
Don Juan, turning to his comrade, who
Though somewhat grieved, could scarce forbear a smile
Upon the metamorphosis in view.
'Farewell!' they mutually exclaimed. 'This soil
Seems fertile in adventures strange and new;
One's turned half Mussulman, and one a maid,
By this old black enchanter's unsought aid.'

LXXXIV

'Farewell, ' said Juan, 'should we meet no more,
I wish you a good appetite.' 'Farewell, '
Replied the other, 'though it grieves me sore.
When we next meet, we'll have a tale to tell.
We needs must follow when Fate puts from shore.
Keep your good name, though Eve herself once fell.'
'Nay, ' quoth the maid, 'the Sultan's self shan't carry me,
Unless His Highness promises to marry me.'

LXXXV

And thus they parted, each by separate doors.
Baba led Juan onward room by room
Through glittering galleries and o'er marble floors,
Till a gigantic portal through the gloom,
Haughty and huge, along the distance lowers;
And wafted far arose a rich perfume.
It seemed as though they came upon a shrine,
For all was vast, still, fragrant, and divine.

LXXXVI

The giant door was broad and bright and high,
Of gilded bronze and carved in curious guise.
Warriors thereon were battling furiously;
Here stalks the victor, there the vanquished lies;
There captives led in triumph droop the eye;
And in perspective many a squadron flies.
It seems the work of times before the line
Of Rome transplanted fell with Constantine.

fell with Constantine ✧ This is Constantine XI who, in 1453, lost the city (Byzantium) founded by Constantine the Great in 330 AD as the capital of the Roman Empire to the Ottoman Mehmed II. So the battle depicted on door presumably dates from some Mediaeval period. The Ottomans had made five earlier attempts to sieze the city during the 15th century: they were repulsed each time by the massive Theodosian walls and the lack of siege technology. Mehmed succeeded in part by the use of massive early cannon.

LXXXVII

This massy portal stood at the wide close
Of a huge hall, and on its either side
Two little dwarfs, the least you could suppose,
Were sate like ugly imps, as if allied
In mockery to the enormous gate which rose
O'er them in almost pyramidic pride.
The gate so splendid was in all its features,
You never thought about those little creatures,

Two little dwarfs ✧ Court dwarfs were a feature of both European and Ottoman palace life well into the 18th century. At the Topkapı Seraglio they served as pages, messengers, and entertainers, and were prized for the comic contrast they offered to te scale of the imperial apartments. They were especially treasured if mutes and castrated (see the next stanza).

LXXXVIII

Until you nearly trod on them, and then
You started back in horror to survey
The wondrous hideousness of those small men,
Whose colour was not black nor white nor grey,
But an extraneous mixture, which no pen
Can trace, although perhaps the pencil may.
They were misshapen pygmies, deaf and dumb
Monsters, who cost a no less monstrous sum.

LXXXIX

Their duty was - for they were strong and though
They looked so little, did strong things at times -
To ope this door, which they could really do
(The hinges being as smooth as Rogers' rhymes),
And now and then with tough strings of the bow,
As is the custom of those eastern climes,
To give some rebel pasha a cravat,
For mutes are generally used for that.

smooth as Rogers' rhymes ✧ Samuel Rogers (1763–1855) was a wealthy banker and minor poet whose verses were widely admired for their polished smoothness. Byron knew him personally and liked him, but found his work characteristically tepid.

a cravat ✧ The mutes' "other duty" is the strangling of condemned Ottoman officials with a bowstring or silken cord—a "cravat". Execution by cord, at the order of the Sultan, was a privilege of high rank: it avoided the disgrace of decapitation by a common executioner. The use of deaf-mute executioners ensured that no last words of the condemned could be overheard and reported.

XC

They spoke by signs, that is, not spoke at all,
And looking like two incubi, they glared
As Baba with his fingers made them fall
To heaving back the portal folds. It scared
Juan a moment, as this pair so small,
With shrinking serpent optics on him stared;
It was as if their little looks could poison
Or fascinate whome'er they fixed their eyes on.

incubi ✧ A fiend who visits in one's sleep.

XCI

Before they entered, Baba paused to hint
To Juan some slight lessons as his guide.
'If you could just contrive, ' he said, 'to stint
That somewhat manly majesty of stride,
'Twould be as well, and (though there's not much in't)
To swing a little less from side to side,
Which has at times an aspect of the oddest;
And also could you look a little modest,

manly majesty of stride ✧ Ever the give-away of a male dressed as a female. Both cultural and physiological factors lead to different strides.

XCII

"Twould be convenient, for these mutes have eyes
Like needles, which may pierce those petticoats;
And if they should discover your disguise,
You know how near us the deep Bosphorus floats,
And you and I may chance ere morning rise,
To find our way to Marmora without boats,
Stitched up in sacks, a mode of navigation
A good deal practised here upon occasion.'

Marmora ✧ The Sea of Marmara (Marmora) is the small sea linked to the Black Sea by the Bosphorous straight and to the Aegean by the straight of the Dardanelles. Constantinople stands, properly speaking, on the eastern mouth of the Sea of Marmara.

Stitched up in sacks ✧ Drowning in a sack was a standard Ottoman punishment for women in the harem convicted of moral offences, or for anyone who had penetrated the harem without authorisation. The condemned were sewn into a leather or canvas sack, sometimes with a cat, and thrown into the Bosphorus. Note that Baba here reveals for the first time that he and Juan are partners in a criminal deception (of the Sultan)

XCIII

With this encouragement, he led the way
    Into a room still nobler than the last.
A rich confusion formed a disarray
    In such sort that the eye along it cast
Could hardly carry anything away -
    Object on object flashed so bright and fast,
A dazzling mass of gems and gold and glitter,
Magnificently mingled in a litter.

XCIV

Wealth had done wonders, taste not much. Such things
    Occur in orient palaces and even
In the more chastened domes of western kings
    (Of which I have also seen some six or seven),
Where I can't say or gold or diamond flings
    Great lustre. There is much to be forgiven:
Groups of bad statues, tables, chairs, and pictures,
On which I cannot pause to make my strictures.

XCV

In this imperial hall at distance lay
    Under a canopy and there reclined
Quite in a confidential queenly way,
    A lady. Baba stopped and kneeling signed
To Juan, who though not much used to pray,
    Knelt down by instinct, wondering in his mind
What all this meant, while Baba bowed and bended
His head, until the ceremony ended.

Under a canopy there reclined... a lady. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres depicted an odalisque, or concubine in 1814 in a pose reminiscent of Georgione's "Sleeping Venus" or Titian's "Venus of Urbino" but in an exotic Romantic style rather than those Neoclassical nudes. It was much criticised at the time for its "distorted" anatomy.

` *The lady, rising up...*

XCVI

The lady, rising up with such an air
As Venus rose with from the wave, on them
Bent like an antelope a Paphian pair
Of eyes, which put out each surrounding gem,
And raising up an arm, as moonlight fair,
She signed to Baba, who first kissed the hem
Of her deep purple robe, and speaking low,
Pointed to Juan, who remained below.

XCVII

Her presence was as lofty as her state;
Her beauty of that overpowering kind,
Whose force description only would abate.
I'd rather leave it much to your own mind
Than lessen it by what I could relate
Of forms and features. It would strike you blind
Could I do justice to the full detail;
So, luckily for both, my phrases fail.

XCVIII

This much however I may add: her years
Were ripe, they might make six and twenty springs,
But there are forms which Time to touch forbears
And turns aside his scythe to vulgar things,
Such as was Marys, Queen of Scots. True, tears
And love destroy, and sapping sorrow wrings
Charms from the charmer, yet some never grow
Ugly, for instance, Ninon de l'Enclos.

XCIX

She spake some words to her attendants, who
Composed a choir of girls, ten or a dozen,
And were all clad alike; like Juan too,
Who wore their uniform, by Baba chosen.
They formed a very nymph-like looking crew,
Which might have called Diana's chorus 'cousin',
As far as outward show may correspond;
I won't be bail for anything beyond.

As Venus rose . . . / Paphian pair ✧ The birth of Venus from the sea-foam is described by Hesiod (*Theogony*, 190–200) and celebrated in the painting tradition. *Paphian* means belonging to Paphos, the city on the south-west coast of Cyprus where Aphrodite (Venus) was said to have first come ashore after her birth, and where her most important temple stood. "A Paphian pair of eyes" are not merely beautiful but charged with divine desire, distinguishing Gulbayez from the more guileless Haidée.

Ninon de l'Enclos ✒ Anne "Ninon" de l'Enclos (1620–1705), French courtesan, wit, and intellectual, was celebrated across Europe as a woman who never aged. She is said to have attracted a young admirer at the age of eighty, and remained a fashionable figure in Parisian salons until her death at eighty-five. A portrait in middle-age by Pierre Mingard

Marys, Queen of Scots ✧ Mary Stuart (1542–87), Queen of Scots and briefly Queen of France, was considered the supreme beauty of her era and remained so in reputation long after her execution by Elizabeth I.

Diana's chorus ✧ In classical myth Diana (the Greek Artemis) was attended by a company of nymphs sworn to virginity, like herself but Byron refuses to warrant their virginity beyond appearances.

C

They bowed obeisance and withdrew, retiring,
But not by the same door through which came in
Baba and Juan, which last stood admiring
At some small distance all he saw within
This strange saloon, much fitted for inspiring
Marvel and praise, for both or none things win.
And I must say, I ne'er could see the very
Great happiness of the nil admirari.

CI

'Not to admire is all the art I know'
(Plain truth, dear Murray, needs few flowers of speech)
'To make men happy, or to keep them so'
(So take it in the very words of Creech).
Thus Horace wrote we all know long ago,
And thus Pope quotes the precept to re-teach
From his translation, but had none admired,
Would Pope have sung, or Horace been inspired?

CII

Baba, when all the damsels were withdrawn,
Motioned to Juan to approach and then
A second time desired him to kneel down
And kiss the lady's foot, which maxim when
He heard repeated, Juan with a frown
Drew himself up to his full height again
And said it grieved him, but he could not stoop
To any shoe, unless it shod the Pope.

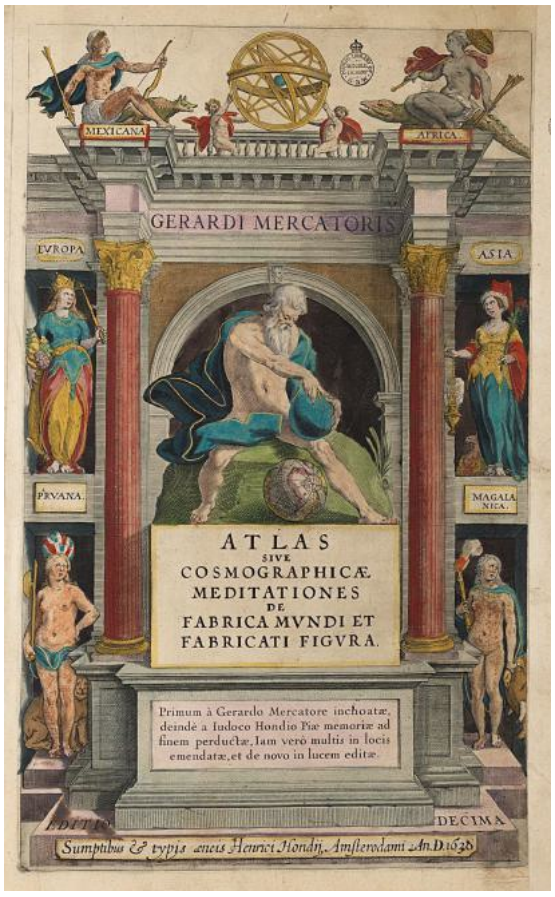
CIII

Baba, indignant at this ill-timed pride,
Made fierce remonstrances, and then a threat
He muttered (but the last was given aside)
About a bowstring - quite in vain. Not yet
Would Juan bend, though 'twere to Mahomet's bride.
There's nothing in the world like etiquette
In kingly chambers or imperial halls,
As also at the race and county balls.

` *He stood like Atlas...*

NIL ADMIRARI ✧ *Nil admirari* — "to wonder at nothing," or "to be moved by nothing" — is the Stoic/Epicurean precept that Horace encapsulates in the first line of *Epistles* I.6: *"Nil admirari prope res est una, Numici, / solaque quae possit facere et servare beatum"*

CREECH... POPE ✧ Thomas Creech (1659–1700) was an Oxford classicist whose popular translation of Horace's *Odes* (1684) was long a standard text. Byron here quotes his translation of the couplet mentioned in the previous stanza . Alexander Pope returned to the same Horatian precept in his own *Imitations of Horace* and *Essay on Man*. Byron's chain of citations — Horace → Creech → Pope — allows him simultaneously to display his classical learning, acknowledge his debt to Pope, and mock the precept itself: if Horace had truly felt nothing, he would not have bothered writing. The aside to "dear Murray" (his publisher, John Murray) is an in-joke: Murray had been pressing Byron to moderate the poem, and Byron here reminds him that great poetry requires passion, not propriety.



HE STOOD LIKE ATLAS ✒ The titan Atlas, according to Hesiod, stood a the Western edge of the world bearing the heavens (οὐρανός) on his shoulders. This was the Roman story, too. But by the time of the Renaissance the giant was said to carry the globe of the earth—hence had a "world of words about his ears". This revision of the original story was reinforced by Mercator's use of Atlas as a geographer in his original "Atlas"—maps of the world—published in 1595

CIV

He stood like Atlas, with a world of words
About his ears, and nathless would not bend.
The blood of all his line's Castilian lords
Boiled in his veins, and rather than descend
To stain his pedigree, a thousand swords
A thousand times of him had made an end.
At length perceiving the 'foot' could not stand,
Baba proposed that he should kiss the hand.

THE 'FOOT' COULD NOT STAND ✧ No, we stand *upon* the foot. This kind of equivocation, of which Byron is quite fond, is called ἀμφιβολία (amphibolia): the use of a phrase susceptible to two different semantic interpretations.

CV

Here was an honourable compromise,
A halfway house of diplomatic rest,
Where they might meet in much more peaceful guise;
And Juan now his willingness exprest
To use all fit and proper courtesies,
Adding that this was commonest and best,
For through the South the custom still commands
The gentleman to kiss the lady's hands.

CVI

And he advanced, though with but a bad grace,
Though on more thoroughbred or fairer fingers
No lips e'er left their transitory trace.
On such as these the lip too fondly lingers
And for one kiss would fain imprint a brace,
As you will see, if she you love shall bring hers
In contact. And sometimes even a fair stranger's
An almost twelvemonth's constancy endangers.

CVII

The lady eyed him o'er and o'er and bade
Baba retire, which he obeyed in style,
As if well used to the retreating trade;
And taking hints in good part all the while,
He whispered Juan not to be afraid,
And looking on him with a sort of smile,
Took leave, with such a face of satisfaction,
As good men wear who have done a virtuous action.

CVIII

When he was gone, there was a sudden change.
I know not what might be the lady's thought,
But o'er her bright brow flashed a tumult strange,
And into her clear cheek the blood was brought,
Blood-red as sunset summer clouds which range
The verge of heaven; and in her large eyes wrought
A mixture of sensations might be scanned,
Of half voluptuousness and half command.

CIX

Her form had all the softness of her sex,
Her features all the sweetness of the devil,
When he put on the cherub to perplex
Eve and paved (God knows how) the road to evil.
The sun himself was scarce more free from specks
Than she from aught at which the eye could cavil;
Yet somehow there was something somewhere wanting,
As if she rather ordered than was granting.

CX

Something imperial or imperious threw
A chain o'er all she did; that is, a chain
Was thrown as 'twere about the neck of you.
And rapture's self will seem almost a pain
With aught which looks like despotism in view.
Our souls at least are free, and 'tis in vain
We would against them make the flesh obey;
The spirit in the end will have its way.

CXI

Her very smile was haughty, though so sweet;
Her very nod was not an inclination.
There was a self-will even in her small feet,
As though they were quite conscious of her station;
They trod as upon necks. And to complete
Her state (it is the custom of her nation),
A poniard decked her girdle, as the sign
She was a sultan's bride (thank heaven, not mine).

HER LARGE EYES. . . COMMAND ✧ There are some intriguing similarities between this description of Gulbeyaz and that of Haidée in Canto II:

". . . and in her air
There was a Something which bespoke Command,
As one who was a Lady in the Land."

— perhaps suggesting that Gulbeyaz, who is compared to the serpent in Eden in the next verse, is a *fallen* version of Haidée:

CXII

'To hear and to obey' had been from birth
The law of all around her; to fulfil
All phantasies which yielded joy or mirth
Had been her slaves' chief pleasure, as her will.
Her blood was high, her beauty scarce of earth;
Judge then if her caprices e'er stood still.
Had she but been a Christian, I've a notion
We should have found out the perpetual motion.

CXIII

Whate'er she saw and coveted was brought;
Whate'er she did not see, if she supposed
It might be seen, with diligence was sought,
And when 'twas found straightway the bargain closed.
There was no end unto the things she bought,
Nor to the trouble which her fancies caused.
Yet even her tyranny had such a grace,
The women pardoned all except her face.

CXIV

Juan, the latest of her whims, had caught
Her eye in passing on his way to sale.
She ordered him directly to be bought,
And Baba, who had ne'er been known to fail
In any kind of mischief to be wrought,
At all such auctions knew how to prevail.
She had no prudence, but he had; and this
Explains the garb which Juan took amiss.

CXV

His youth and features favoured the disguise,
And should you ask how she, a sultan's bride,
Could risk or compass such strange phantasies,
This I must leave sultanas to decide.
Emperors are only husbands in wives' eyes,
And kings and consorts oft are mystified,
As we may ascertain with due precision,
Some by experience, others by tradition.

THE PERPETUAL MOTION ✧ An impossible source of zero inertia and thus infinite energy. Perhaps implies Gulbeyaz' insatiable appetite.

WHATE'ER SHE SAW ✧ One interpretation of ***Don⚔Juan***, as ***PC*** notes, would make this portrait of Gulbeyaz *thematic* for the Poem: a statement of an idea Byron hints at in passing in his references to Semiramis and Ninon de l'Eclos in this Canto, but also on several occasions elsewhere. Gulbeyaz embodies qualities of female sexual desire and dominion that in her to some extent, and in Catherine of Russia (Canto IX) to a much greater extent, rules the world. It's a quality that emerges in all the leading female characters in the Poem, including Haidée who rules as Princess of her father's land. Of course Byron is not alone in this thesis: Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* is still more explicit in stating that this is what women really want: "My lige lady, generally, quod he,/ Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee/ As wel over hir housbond as hir love."

KINGS AND CONSORTS OFT ARE MYSTIFIED ✧ Likely a second reference to George IV's attempt to divorce Queen Caroline. See Stanza LX

CXVI

But to the main point, where we have been tending.
She now conceived all difficulties past
And deemed herself extremely condescending
When, being made her property at last,
Without more preface, in her blue eyes blending
Passion and power, a glance on him she cast,
And merely saying, 'Christian, canst thou love?'
Conceived that phrase was quite enough to move.

CXVII

And so it was, in proper time and place;
But Juan, who had still his mind o'erflowing
With Haide's isle and soft Ionian face,
Felt the warm blood, which in his face was glowing,
Rush back upon his heart, which filled apace,
And left his cheeks as pale as snowdrops blowing.
These words went through his soul like Arab spears,
So that he spoke not, but burst into tears.

CXVIII

She was a good deal shocked; not shocked at tears,
For women shed and use them at their liking.
But there is something when man's eye appears
Wet, still more disagreeable and striking.
A woman's teardrop melts, a man's half sears
Like molten lead, as if you thrust a pike in
His heart to force it out, for (to be shorter)
To them 'tis a relief, to us a torture.

CXIX

And she would have consoled, but knew not how;
Having no equals, nothing which had e'er
Infected her with sympathy till now,
And never having dreamt what 'twas to bear
Aught of a serious sorrowing kind, although
There might arise some pouting petty care
To cross her brow, she wondered how so near
Her eyes another's eye could shed a tear.

CXX

But nature teaches more than power can spoil;
And when a strong although a strange sensation
Moves, female hearts are such a genial soil
For kinder feelings, whatsoe'er their nation,
They naturally pour the 'wine and oil',
Samaritans in every situation.
And thus Gulbeyaz, though she knew not why,
Felt an odd glistening moisture in her eye.

CXXI

But tears must stop like all things else; and soon
Juan, who for an instant had been moved
To such a sorrow by the intrusive tone
Of one who dared to ask if he had loved,
Called back the stoic to his eyes, which shone
Bright with the very weakness he reproved.
And although sensitive to beauty, he
Felt most indignant still at not being free.

CXXII

Gulbeyaz, for the first time in her days,
Was much embarrassed, never having met
In all her life with aught save prayers and praise;
And as she also risked her life to get
Him whom she meant to tutor in love's ways
Into a comfortable tête-à-tête,
To lose the hour would make her quite a martyr,
And they had wasted now almost a quarter.

Gulbeyaz ✧ Her change in tone bring the first mention of her name it may mean "White rose."

CXXIII

I also would suggest the fitting time
To gentlemen in any such like case,
That is to say, in a meridian clime
(With us there is more law given to the chase),
But here a small delay forms a great crime.
So recollect that the extremest grace
Is just two minutes for your declaration;
A moment more would hurt your reputation.

CXXIV

Juan's was good and might have been still better,
But he had got Haidée into his head.
However strange, he could not yet forget her,
Which made him seem exceedingly ill-bred.
Gulbeyaz, who looked on him as her debtor
For having had him to her palace led,
Began to blush up to the eyes and then
Grow deadly pale and then blush back again.

CXXV

At length, in an imperial way, she laid
Her hand on his and bending on him eyes,
Which needed not an empire to persuade,
Looked into his for love, where none replies.
Her brow grew black, but she would not upbraid,
That being the last thing a proud woman tries.
She rose and pausing one chaste moment, threw
Herself upon his breast, and there she grew.

CXXVI

This was an awkward test, as Juan found,
But he was steeled by sorrow, wrath, and pride.
With gentle force her white arms he unwound
And seated her all drooping by his side.
Then rising haughtily he glanced around
And looking coldly in her face, he cried,
'The prisoned eagle will not pair, nor I
Serve a sultana's sensual phantasy.

The prisoned eagle will not pair ✧ Juan's speech here, despite comically poor timing, is one of the few instances in the poem when he sheds his usual passivity.

CXXVII

'Thou ask'st if I can love; be this the proof
How much I have loved - that I love not thee!
In this vile garb, the distaff, web, and woof
Were fitter for me. Love is for the free!
I am not dazzled by this splendid roof.
Whate'er thy power, and great it seems to be,
Heads bow, knees bend, eyes watch around a throne,
And hands obey - our hearts are still our own.'

CXXVIII

This was a truth to us extremely trite;
Not so to her, who ne'er had heard such things.
She deemed her least command must yield delight,
Earth being only made for queens and kings.
If hearts lay on the left side or the right
She hardly knew; to such perfection brings
Legitimacy its born votaries when
Aware of their due royal rights o'er men.

CXXIX

Besides, as has been said, she was so fair
As even in a much humbler lot had made
A kingdom or confusion anywhere,
And also, as may be presumed, she laid
Some stress on charms, which seldom are, if e'er,
By their possessors thrown into the shade.
She thought hers gave a double 'right divine',
And half of that opinion's also mine.

CXXX

Remember or (if you cannot) imagine,
Ye who have kept your chastity when young,
While some more desperate dowager has been waging
Love with you and been in the dog days stung
By your refusal, recollect her raging!
Or recollect all that was said or sung
On such a subject; then suppose the face
Of a young downright beauty in this case.

CXXXI

Suppose, but you already have supposed,
The spouse of Potiphar, the Lady Booby,
Phedra, and all which story has disclosed
Of good examples. Pity that so few by
Poets and private tutors are exposed,
To educate - ye youth of Europe - you by!
But when you have supposed the few we know,
You can't suppose Gulbeyaz' angry brow.

Legitimacy ✧ After the defeat of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), *Legitimacy* became the political watchword of Metternich's "Holy Alliance" of Austria, Prussia, and Russia for the restoration of hereditary monarchies throughout Europe. Byron, a committed liberal and supporter of European nationalist movements, despised the concept as sanctifying tyranny by birth-right. The word carries its full political charge here: Gulbeyaz's inability to conceive of another person's feelings is the psychological expression of the doctrine that the hereditary sovereign's will is automatically correct.

Spouse of Potiphar ✎ A clichéd subject of academic art: Joseph's escape from the lusty embrace of the Pharoh's wife. Here, by Nicolas Bertin, 1690

spouse of Potiphar, the Lady Booby, Phedra ✧ Three canonical examples of women pursuing unwilling men. The Pharoh *Potiphar's* wife (*Genesis* 39): attempts to seduce Joseph, the Hebrew slave; when he refuses and flees, she accuses him of assault and has him imprisoned. *Lady Booby*: in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) — a parody of Richardson's *Pamela* — the highborn lady pursues her virtuous footman (the novel's Joseph, a deliberate echo of the biblical one) with mounting desperation and decreasing dignity. *Phèdre* (Phaedra): in Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Racine's *Phèdre* (1677), the wife of Theseus is consumed by a passion for her stepson Hippolytus, who recoils in horror; her attempted revenge destroys them both.

The reason we have "already supposed" Gulbeyaz to be like Potiphar's wife is Byron's use of the same metaphor in the concluding bedroom scene in Canto I where

Juan contrived to give an awkward blow,
And then his only garment quite gave way;
He fled, like Joseph, leaving it; but there,
I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair

CXXXII

A tigress robbed of young, a lioness,
Or any interesting beast of prey,
Are similes at hand for the distress
Of ladies who cannot have their own way;
But though my turn will not be served with less,
These don't express one half what I should say.
For what is stealing young ones, few or many,
To cutting short their hopes of having any?

A tigress robbed of young ✧ The simile of the bereaved tigress for female rage is a classical topos with its sharpest expression in Seneca's *Medea* (c. line 862), where Medea is likened to a tigress robbed of her cubs as she steels herself to kill her children. In English literature, York's "O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" (Henry VI Part III, I.iv.137), addressed to Margaret of Anjou, is perhaps the best-known version of the figure. Gulbeyaz's frustration is not that something has been taken from her, but that the possibility of having it at all has been refused. Tongue-in-cheek, Byron suggests that *something*, in this case, is loss of an opportunity to be a mother.

CXXXIII

The love of offspring's Nature's general law,
From tigresses and cubs to ducks and ducklings.
There's nothing whets the beak or arms the claw
Like an invasion of their babes and sucklings.
And all who have seen a human nursery, saw
How mothers love their children's squalls and chucklings.
And this extreme effect (to tire no longer
Your patience) shows the cause must still be stronger.

CXXXIV

If I said fire flashed from Gulbeyaz' eyes,
'Twere nothing, for her eyes flashed always fire;
Or said her cheeks assumed the deepest dyes,
I should but bring disgrace upon the dyer,
So supernatural was her passion's rise,
For ne'er till now she knew a checked desire.
Even ye who know what a checked woman is
(Enough, God knows!) would much fall short of this.

CXXXV

Her rage was but a minute's, and 'twas well -
A moment's more had slain her; but the while
It lasted 'twas like a short glimpse of hell.
Nought's more sublime than energetic bile,
Though horrible to see, yet grand to tell,
Like ocean warring' gainst a rocky isle;
And the deep passions flashing through her form
Made her a beautiful embodied storm.

CXXXVI

A vulgar tempest 'twere to a typhoon
To match a common fury with her rage,
And yet she did not want to reach the moon,
Like moderate Hotspur on the immortal page.
Her anger pitched into a lower tune,
Perhaps the fault of her soft sex and age.
Her wish was but to 'kill, kill, kill', like Lear's,
And then her thirst of blood was quenched in tears.

She did not want to reach the moon ✧ Harry Hotspur (Henry Percy) boasts in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part One* (III.i.55–7) that he would pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon and "dive into the bottom of the deep" to retrieve it from drowning. Hotspur's extravagant ambition is Byron's comic standard for excess: by comparison with this, he says, Gulbeyaz's wish merely to kill everyone in the room is "moderate."

Kill, kill, kill ✧ In *King Lear* (IV.vi.185–6), the mad Lear on the cliffs of Dover rages: "kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!" — six repetitions in Shakespeare, compressed to three by Byron. Both Hotspur and Lear are characterised by magnificent excess; the joke of the stanza is that Gulbeyaz's fury is *less* excessive than theirs only in scale, not in nature. "And then her thirst of blood was quenched in tears" is one of Byron's best bathetic turns.

CXXXVII

A storm it raged, and like the storm it passed,
Passed without words; in fact she could not speak.
And then her sex's shame broke in at last,
A sentiment till then in her but weak,
But now it flowed in natural and fast,
As water through an unexpected leak,
For she felt humbled; and humiliation
Is sometimes good for people in her station.

CXXXVIII

It teaches them that they are flesh and blood,
It also gently hints to them that others,
Although of clay, are yet not quite of mud,
That urns and pipkins are but fragile brothers,
And works of the same pottery, bad or good,
Though not all born of the same sires and mothers.
It teaches - heaven knows only what it teaches,
But sometimes it may mend, and often reaches.

Urns and pipkins are but fragile brothers ✧ The biblical metaphor for human mortality as clay pottery is found, among other places, in *Genesis* 2:7 ("the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground") and *Jeremiah* 18:2–6 (the potter and his clay as an image of divine sovereignty over human fate). The *pipkin* is a small earthenware cooking pot; urns the aristocracy of pottery. But both are clay, both break.

CXXXIX

Her first thought was to cut off Juan's head;
Her second, to cut only his - acquaintance;
Her third, to ask him where he had been bred;
Her fourth, to rally him into repentance;
Her fifth, to call her maids and go to bed;
Her sixth, to stab herself; her seventh, to sentence
The lash to Baba; but her grand resource
Was to sit down again, and cry of course.

Her first thought ✧ The cascade of sequential, mutually contradictory thoughts—death, then social snub, then maternal curiosity, then moral instruction, then retreat, then self-destruction—is a set-piece of comic psychology that has an antecedent in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) in which the servant-girl Betty, after failing to seduce the chaste Joseph Andrews, experiences almost the same rapid succession of impulses (to stab Joseph, to devour him with kisses, to drown herself) before resolving matters by bedding someone else entirely. It cements a degree of sympathy for Gulbeyaz: like Fielding's Betty, she is more comic than villainous.

CXL

She thought to stab herself, but then she had
The dagger close at hand, which made it awkward,
For eastern stays are little made to pad,
So that a poniard pierces if 'tis stuck hard.
She thought of killing Juan, but, poor lad,
Though he deserved it well for being so backward,
The cutting off his head was not the art
Most likely to attain her aim - his heart.

CXLI

Juan was moved; he had made up his mind
To be impaled, or quartered as a dish
For dogs, or to be slain with pangs refined,
Or thrown to lions, or made baits for fish,
And thus heroically stood resigned,
Rather than sin - except to his own wish.
But all his great preparatives for dying
Dissolved like snow before a woman crying.

CXLII

As through his palms Bob Acres' valour oozed,
So Juan's virtue ebbed, I know not how.
And first he wondered why he had refused,
And then, if matters could be made up now,
And next his savage virtue he accused,
Just as a friar may accuse his vow,
Or as a dame repents her of her oath,
Which mostly ends in some small breach of both.

Bob Acres' valour ✧ Bob Acres is a comic character in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775), a jovial country squire who is manoeuvred into challenging an imaginary rival to a duel. Waiting for his opponent and convinced he is about to be killed, Acres reflects that "valour will come and go" and that "I feel it oozing out as it were at the palms of my hands." Still, where Acres sweats with fear, Juan's "virtue" evaporates from desire.

CXLIII

So he began to stammer some excuses,
But words are not enough in such a matter,
Although you borrowed all that e'er the Muses
Have sung, or even a dandy's dandiest chatter,
Or all the figures Castlereagh abuses.
Just as a languid smile began to flatter,
His peace was making, but before he ventured
Further, old Baba rather briskly entered.

all the figures Castlereagh abuses ✧ Viscount Castlereagh, the mock *Dedicatee* of ***Don⚔Juan***, was Foreign Secretary from 1812 to his death by suicide in 1822. Byron detested him — partly for political reasons: Castlereagh was the architect of the post-Napoleonic settlement Byron opposed at every point — and partly on aesthetic grounds: Castlereagh was notorious for mixed metaphors and tangled syntax in parliamentary speeches. In the Preface to Cantos VI–VIII Byron compares him to Mrs. Malaprop, Sheridan's verbal catastrophist in *The Rivals*. The footnote Byron attached to the original text here reads: "I allude, of course, not to figures of rhetoric, but of arithmetic." This arch qualification — Castlereagh abuses the figures of *accounts* rather than of *oratory* — widens the accusation from incompetence to dishonesty.

Note: The *Dedication* to ***Don⚔Juan*** was suppressed by John Murray who was frightened by its scathing attacks on Castelreagh and the *Laker* poets. It was first published in the posthumous 1833 edition of Byron's *Collected Works*. I made a narrated e-book of the Dedication and Canto 1 in 2012 that you can find on the Apple bookstore

CXLIV

'Bride of the Sun and Sister of the Moon'
('Twas thus he spake) 'and Empress of the Earth!
Whose frown would put the spheres all out of tune,
Whose smile makes all the planets dance with mirth,
Your slave brings tidings - he hopes not too soon -
Which your sublime attention may be worth.
The Sun himself has sent me like a ray
To hint that he is coming up this way.'

CXLV

'Is it', exclaimed Gulbeyaz, 'as you say?
I wish to heaven he would not shine till morning!
But bid my women form the milky way.
Hence, my old comet, give the stars due warning.
And Christian, mingle with them as you may,
And as you'd have me pardon your past scorning - '
Here they were interrupted by a humming
Sound and then by a cry, 'the Sultan's coming!'

CXLVI

First came her damsels, a decorous file,
And then His Highness' eunuchs, black and white;
The train might reach a quarter of a mile.
His Majesty was always so polite
As to announce his visits a long while
Before he came, especially at night;
For being the last wife of the emperor,
She was of course the favourite of the four.

CXLVII

His Highness was a man of solemn port,
Shawled to the nose and bearded to the eyes,
Snatched from a prison to preside at court.
His lately bowstrung brother caused his rise.
He was as good a sovereign of the sort
As any mentioned in the histories
Of Cantemir or Knolles, where few shine
Save Solyman, the glory of their line.

bid my women form the milky way ✧ Gulbeyaz extends Baba's astronomical metaphors with swift, involuntary wit. Her quickness of language, even in crisis, marks her as someone more interesting than her petulant fury in the preceding stanzas might have suggested.

His lately bowstrung brother ✧ Byron is deliberately vague about the Sultan's identity — as ***PC*** notes, the Sultan who should be reigning in 1790, the poem's approximate date, is Selim III, who was in fact a reforming moderniser; nothing like the amiably ignorant despot described here. Selim was *bowstringed* in 1808 by his cousin, Mustapha, in whose favor he had abdicated, who was in turn imprisioned and *bowstringed* by his nephew Mahmoud II, with whom Byron and Hobhouse had an audience in July 1810 during their youthful tour of the East.

Cantemir or Knolles ✧ Two standard English-language histories of the Ottoman Empire that Byron had read in boyhood.

Solyman, the glory of their line ✧ Suleiman II, "the Magnificent" (1494–1566), was in the universal estimate of both historians the greatest of the Ottoman sultans — conqueror of Belgrade, Rhodes, and much of Hungary, and a poet and lawgiver of genuine distinction.

CXLVIII

He went to mosque in state and said his prayers
With more than 'Oriental scrupulosity'.
He left to his vizier all state affairs
And showed but little royal curiosity.
I know not if he had domestic cares;
No process proved connubial animosity.
Four wives and twice five hundred maids, unseen,
Were ruled as calmly as a Christian queen.

'Oriental scrupulosity' ✧ The phrase is from Samuel Johnson's *Life of Swift* (1779–81) in the *Lives of the Poets*: Johnson remarks that Swift, unlike most men of his era, washed "with oriental scrupulosity."

No process proved connubial animosity ✧ A jibe at George IV's expense in the third reference in this Canto to the King's attempt, in 1820, to divorce Queen Caroline of Brunswick by Act of Parliament (the "Pains and Penalties Bill"), tried before the House of Lords in a ludicrous public spectacle. The bill was withdrawn in November 1820 after the Lords voted to proceed by only nine votes. Byron had supported the Queen publicly and vociferously. The Ottoman Sultan, who avoids such domestic "processes" by having his legal difficulties quietly settled with a sack and the Bosphorus (see next stanza), is the ironic positive of which George IV is the comic negative.

CXLIX

If now and then there happened a slight slip,
Little was heard of criminal or crime.
The story scarcely passed a single lip;
The sack and sea had settled all in time,
From which the secret nobody could rip.
The public knew no more than does this rhyme;
No scandals made the daily press a curse.
Morals were better, and the fish no worse.

CL

He saw with his own eyes the moon was round,
Was also certain that the earth was square,
Because he had journeyed fifty miles and found
No sign that it was circular anywhere.
His empire also was without a bound;
'Tis true, a little troubled here and there
By rebel pashas and encroaching giaours,
But then they never came to 'the Seven Towers',

saw with his own eyes ✧ The Sultan's ignorance is self-confirming: like other despots, he sees only what he wishes to see.

the Seven Towers ✧ The *Yedikule* (Seven Towers), a Byzantine-Ottoman fortress at the southern end of the Theodosian land-walls of Constantinople, was used as a state prison and, in particular, as the detention-place for ambassadors from countries with which the Porte was at war—the Ottomans viewing all ambassadors as potential hostages (see next verse). Byron and Hobhouse attempted to visit it in 1810 but were turned away without a firman.

CLI

Except in shape of envoys, who were sent
To lodge there when a war broke out, according
To the true law of nations, which ne'er meant
Those scoundrels, who have never had a sword in
Their dirty diplomatic hands, to vent
Their spleen in making strife and safely wording
Their lies, ycleped dispatches, without risk or
The singeing of a single inky whisker.

Their dirty diplomatic hands ✧ This Byronic spleen aimed at diplomacy seems to refer to the *diplomatic* "solutions" adopted by Castlereagh and his colleagues at the Congress of Vienna (1814–15). They redrew the map of Europe in dispatches while soldiers bled.

CLII

He had fifty daughters and four dozen sons,
Of whom all such as came of age were stowed,
The former in a palace, where like nuns
They lived till some bashaw was sent abroad,
When she, whose turn it was, was wed at once,
Sometimes at six years old. Though this seems odd,
'Tis true; the reason is that the bashaw
Must make a present to his sire-in-law.

Sometimes at six years old ✧ The Baron de Tott, whose *Memoirs* (1784) Byron had read, records the case of Asma Sultana, daughter of Ahmed III, who complained that she had been united at thirteen to a "decrepit old man" and inspired in her "nothing but disgust." Six years old appears to be Byron's hyperbole, but not by much: Ottoman imperial daughters were frequently married as minors to provincial governors (*pashas* or *bashaws*), the groom being required to make a substantial gift to the Sultan in return.

CLIII

His sons were kept in prison, till they grew
Of years to fill a bowstring or the throne,
One or the other, but which of the two
Could yet be known unto the fates alone.
Meantime the education they went through
Was princely, as the proofs have always shown,
So that the heir apparent still was found
No less deserving to be hanged than crowned.

His sons were kept in prison ✧ The *kafes* (cage), a gilded palace-prison within the Topkapı Seraglio, was introduced from the late 16th century onward as an alternative to the earlier Ottoman practice of executing all male relatives on a Sultan's accession. Princes were confined in the kafes from childhood, denied political experience and often education; they were released either to take the throne (if the reigning Sultan died without sons of age) or strangled at the Sultan's order. The system produced a series of unstable, uneducated sultans throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, which the couplet's punchline — "the heir apparent still was found / No less deserving to be hanged than crowned" — accurately acknowledges.

CLIV

His Majesty saluted his fourth spouse
With all the ceremonies of his rank,
Who cleared her sparkling eyes and smoothed her brows,
As suits a matron who has played a prank.
These must seem doubly mindful of their vows,
To save the credit of their breaking bank.
To no men are such cordial greetings given
As those whose wives have made them fit for heaven.

fit for heaven ✧ E.H. Coleridge, editing the poem in 1898, admitted defeat at the reference and later editors have followed him.

CLV

His Highness cast around his great black eyes
And looking, as he always looked, perceived
Juan amongst the damsels in disguise,
At which he seemed no whit surprised nor grieved,
But just remarked with air sedate and wise,
While still a fluttering sigh Gulbeyaz heaved,
'I see you've bought another girl; 'tis pity
That a mere Christian should be half so pretty.'

a mere Christian should be half so pretty. ✧ An anonymous account in the *New Monthly Magazine* (1827, XIX, p.147) records that when Byron attended an audience with Sultan Mahmoud II on July 10, 1810, the Sultan was so struck by his appearance that he subsequently refused to believe, on being told that the young English *milord* had gone to fight with the Greeks, that he and the beautiful figure at the reception were the same person — "insisting that the person who had appeared before him on that occasion was a woman dressed in man's clothes." Whether or not this is accurate, Byron clearly knew the story and almost certainly had it in mind here.

CLVI

This compliment, which drew all eyes upon
    The new-bought virgin, made her blush and shake.
Her comrades, also, thought themselves undone.
    Oh Mahomet, that His Majesty should take
Such notice of a giaour, while scarce to one
    Of them his lips imperial ever spake!
There was a general whisper, toss, and wriggle,
But etiquette forbade them all to giggle.

CLVII

The Turks do well to shut, at least sometimes,
    The women up, because in sad reality
Their chastity in these unhappy climes
    Is not a thing of that astringent quality
Which in the North prevents precocious crimes
    And makes our snow less pure than our morality.
The sun, which yearly melts the polar ice,
Has quite the contrary effect on vice.

CLVIII

Thus in the East they are extremely strict,
    And wedlock and a padlock mean the same;
Excepting only when the former's picked,
    It ne'er can be replaced in proper frame,
Spoilt, as a pipe of claret is when pricked.
    But then their own polygamy's to blame;
Why don't they knead two virtuous souls for life
Into that moral centaur, man and wife?

CLIX

Thus far our chronicle, and now we pause,
    Though not for want of matter; but 'tis time,
According to the ancient epic laws,
    To slacken sail and anchor with our rhyme.
Let this fifth canto meet with due applause,
    The sixth shall have a touch of the sublime.
Meanwhile, as Homer sometimes sleeps, perhaps
You'll pardon to my Muse a few short naps.

MAKES OUR SNOW LESS PURE THAN OUR MORALITY ✧ The "climate theory" of morality — the idea that hot southern climates produce sensuality while cold northern climates produce restraint — was a commonplace of Enlightenment political philosophy, most systematically stated by Montesquieu in *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748, Bk. XIV). Byron has several times made fun of the idea, for example in Canto I.856: "*What men call gallantry, and gods adultery, / Is much more common where the climate's sultry.*"

WEDLOCK AND A PADLOCK ✧ The *lock* contained in *wedlock* is hardly an original idea, already present in 17th-century sermons. The simile that follows — "Spoilt, as a pipe of claret is when pricked" — is Rabelaisian in its cheerful crudity: a *pipe* is a large cask of wine (c. 105 gallons); "pricked" claret has turned sour.

THAT MORAL CENTAUR ✧ The centaur — half man, half horse — is Byron's telling image for the married couple: a single entity constituted by two incompatible natures — such as Byron and Annabella Millbanke — forced into proximity. The stanza as a whole was omitted from the first edition of Canto V by Murray without Byron's knowledge or consent, provoking a furious letter.

AS HOMER SOMETIMES SLEEPS ✧ Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 359: *quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus* — "even the good Homer sometimes nods." Byron had used the same Horatian saw at III, l. 873 ("We learn from Horace, Homer sometimes sleeps"). But Horace was objecting (mildly) to mediocre passages of Homer, not to fatigue. Byron, after 1270 lines of invention and wit claims the right to a nap. The fair-copy note records: "End of Canto 5th — finished Ravenna. Novr. 27th. 1820. — Begun Octr. 16th. 1820." Six weeks, from the seraglio scenes to the envoi.

About

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